

WFGA March 2025 newsletter

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Newsletter.

Saturday 1st March. Kidderminster Repair Café at the Youth House, Bromsgrove Street. Our skilled volunteers will be ready to repair your items at our next Repair Cafe of 2025 from 10am till 1pm. Donations only.

Monday 3rd March 8.0 pm. Green Drinks. Join us at Bewdley Rowing Club to discuss “homes for the future”. We have chatted about the technologies and habits that can make our homes more energy efficient and reduce our personal impacts on the environment. Now is the chance to move on to considering how the housing crisis can be addressed in a sustainable way. Can we create new cohesive, resilient and sustainable communities without destroying more green countryside.? Are new towns the answer or is building on the green and brown areas surrounding existing towns and villages the only way forward? Join us for a lively, pertinent and free-range discussion in an informal atmosphere.

Tuesday 4th March, Wyre Forest XR fortnightly local group meeting: 7.30-9pm at Bewdley Quaker Meeting House, Lower Park, DY12 2DP with a friendly social gathering afterwards at a local hostelry. Contact David Whiting wyreforest.xr@gmail.com

Thursday 6th March at 7.30pm Cinema in the Hall. Conclave (12)
St. George's Hall, Bewdley. Tickets £6. Cinema in the Hall is every Thursday. On following Thursdays in March will be “The Substance”, “The Room Next Door” and “Wicked”. Come and support this important community venue which exists to serve our local communities. Professional grade projection and sound systems. For details of forthcoming films [go to link.](#)

Tuesday 11th March Wyre Forest Climate Choir rehearsal. 7.30- 9.0 pm
Venue: Offmore Church Hall, Gray Close, Kidderminster DY10 3YE.
Songs calling for action to clean up our rivers and tackle climate change.
We are part of the national Climate Choir movement.
Contact Hilary at hilarymueller@hotmail.com

Thursday 13th of March, 9.30-11.30am. Local Groups Community Showcase Event at St Anne's Church, Looking for a new hobby. Drop in to find out about



To find out more, [see article](#) further down this newsletter.

Saturday 15th March 10.0 – 1.0 Transition Bewdley Repair Café at St Georges Hall. As always, our wonderful volunteers will be on hand to help you with items ranging from radios and table lamps to teddy bears and garments with missing buttons or garden implements in need of sharpening. Whether you need someone to mend your item or give advice and support on carrying out repairs yourself, we are here to help. I have been asked to remind our lovely customers that items should be clean. We occasionally get appliances that have been stored in a shed for years and which are covered in grime and oil. That is not fair to our volunteers and makes their jobs harder. Also, anyone wanting help with a clock that is not working well is reminded that clock repairs take not only time but great skill. Please bring them as soon after 10.0 as possible to give our skilled clock-repairers a chance to help you. As always, only bikes need to be booked in advance. For these, email john.rhymer50@gmail.com

Tuesday March 18th 10.30 am Saving the Planet one Carrot at a Time.

The St Anne's Ecology Justice Group's next meeting in St Anne's Church. Our speaker will be Liz Courtney who runs the market garden at Haye Farm. She will speak to the title:

Many of us enjoyed the vegetable boxes that Liz produced last year. Liz will outline her progress so far and her plans for next year and will share her passion for an ecologically friendly agriculture that respects the integrity of the planet. All welcome!

Tuesday 18th March, Wyre Forest XR fortnightly local group meeting: 7.30-9pm at Bewdley Quaker Meeting House, Lower Park, DY12 2DP, with a friendly social gathering afterwards at a local hostelry.

Contact David Whiting wyreforest.xr@gmail.com

Saturday 22 March, 10am To 12pm. "Rake and Cake" St. Leonard's Churchyard, Ribbesford

Or Any Time You Can Spare That Day

Do your bit to keep our churchyard beautiful and accessible, whilst enjoying drinks and cake! Volunteers are invited to tidy, chop and lop before the winter, and to plant native flower seeds and bulbs. All ages welcome. Bring boots, gloves and any useful tools.

Tuesday 25th March. Wyre Forest Climate Choir rehearsal. 7.30- 9.0 pm

Venue: Offmore Church Hall, Gray Close, Kidderminster DY10 3YE.

Songs calling for action to clean up our rivers and tackle climate change.

We are part of the national Climate Choir movement.

Contact Hilary at hilarymueller@hotmail.com

Saturday 28th March at 7.00pm Bewdley Concert Band "Concert for Spring"

St. George's Hall, Bewdley Tickets £10 Under 16s Free. For details of the regular live music and other events [go to link](#)

Saturday 29th March 10am to 12.30 Topsy Flowers. Wyre Community Land Trust

Ruskin Club workshops take place every month from March to November. Contact us for the full programme.

Participants will spend a morning making traditional gypsy flowers out of hazel, oak or ash harvested sustainably from the Wyre Forest whilst sitting on a shave-horse, using a traditional draw knife. After mastering this easy-to-learn craft, engage with the Spirit of the Wyre with tastings of Wildjac's naturally flavoured gins, vodkas and rums (non-alcoholic also available).

Participants will take their bunch of flowers home with them, as well as a Wildjac miniature bottle of their choice and a bottle of Wyre Community Land Trust apple juice made with apples gathered from local orchards.

These workshops will take place at St George's Farm, Tanner's Hill, Bewdley, Worcs where the Wyre Community Land Trust is based.

All materials for the activity, tools and work gloves will be provided. £40 pp

To book, call 01299 488083, email events@wyreclt.org.uk or book via our website www.wyreclt.org.uk. Further details and directions will be supplied on booking

Monday 31 March 7pm - 8.30pm Greener Living Fair, Wribbenhall Community Centre Shaw Hedge Rd, Bewdley, DY12 1EU

Locally produced food and arts & crafts, plus stalls and information to help you be more eco-friendly. Organised by WFGA.

Wednesday 2nd April. CARP Public Meeting (7-9pm at Bewdley Baptist Church, 61 High St, Bewdley DY12 2DJ, UK) Please come along to support CARP and find out what we have achieved and our future plans.

And some advance dates for your diary. Details soon.

9th May 2025 SustFeast 25 at *St Michaels and All Angels Church, Stourport.*

SustFest 2025 throughout June. A month packed with events, talks, walks and sustainable festivals.

Saturday 7th June A Fabulous Festival of Fun, Food and Fashion. Kidderminster

Saturday 14th June Help build our future. A day of talks and workshops. Bewdley

Sunday 15th June CARP Memorial Day to save our rivers. Bewdley

Sunday 29th June Family Eco-Day. Stourport.

Local Groups Community Showcase comes to Bewdley

A brand-new showcase shining the light on local groups in Bewdley and surrounding rural villages is coming in March. The event is aimed at residents who are new to the area, looking for a new hobby, social group or simply want to get involved with their local community.

Organised by Wyre Forest District Council, the Local Groups Community Showcase is free to attend and takes place on Thursday 13 March from 9.30am – 11.30am at St Anne's Church, Load Street, Bewdley, DY12 2AP.

Over 25 local groups will be in attendance, including Bewdley Tennis Club, Ellie's Little Gems, Bewdley Bellringing, All Saint's Church knitting group, Bewdley Rotary Club and more. Visitors can drop in any time for a friendly chat and browse the wide range of opportunities on offer.

Wyre Forest District Council will also be at the event to talk to residents about the welfare support available to them.

Councillor Tracey Onslow, Wyre Forest District Council's Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Arts and Community Safety said,

"Local groups are at the heart of our communities and make a real difference to the lives of many residents. The Local Groups Community Showcase is a great way to find out how you can get involved, whether you want to make a difference in the area, learn a new skill, get active, or meet likeminded people."

Elaine Barbour, a member of St Anne's Church who helps to run the Thursday morning 4Cs (coffee, cake, company, and conversation), said,

"Bewdley is a fantastic community to be a part of. There are so many groups, from those offering help and friendship to those working to promote a better world for everyone. This event is a great opportunity to get a taste of what's on offer, especially for those who might be new to the area. You'll get a warm welcome and plenty of time to chat over tea and coffee and of course, homemade cake!"

For more information about the showcase, contact Wyre Forest District Council's Community Builder, Elaine Halford-Bishop on 01562 732527 or email elaine.halford-bishop@wyreforestdc.gov.uk.

Kidderminster Town Council considered the **Climate Emergency** at its January 2025 meeting. A background [report](#) was presented and the following resolution was passed unanimously:

A. To ensure that the activities of the Town Council are carbon neutral by 2035.

- B. To promote biodiversity across the Council's parks and open spaces.
- C. To actively encourage and support actions that will make Kidderminster (as a whole) more environmentally sustainable, and
- D. To expand the remit of the Biodiversity Working Group to address the climate emergency, including the above actions and that the Working Group presents a draft Action Plan for approval at the October meeting of the Council.

To feed in your suggestions to help expand on a Climate Action Plan for Kidderminster Town Council and/or to indicate interest in participating in the Climate Working Group, please write to working group chair, Cllr Doug Hine at doug.hine@kidderminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

Exciting News from Wyre Forest Community Housing.

Usmere Road Set to Bloom: Plans for Miyawaki Forest to Take Root!

Community Housing is launching a brand-new green initiative set to transform an area of green space at Usmere Road, Broadwaters, Kidderminster as plans to plant our first-ever [Miyawaki forest](#) move forward.

We have consulted with local residents about the project which aims to enhance biodiversity, improve air quality, and create a vibrant green space for the community to enjoy for generations to come.

Worcestershire County Council will be supplying the trees using funding it has secured from The Coronation Living Heritage Fund., and the project will commence once ground preparation works are complete. The Miyawaki method, known for its dense, fast-growing forests, will allow the creation of a self-sustaining ecosystem in a fraction of the time it takes traditional woodlands to mature.

This initiative reflects our growing commitment to environmental sustainability and community engagement. It follows a zoom session hosted by WFGA when Wade Muggleton of WCC presented a workshop on Miyawaki Forests and Community Orchards.

More news from Community Housing. This year there is a new category in their Gardens in Bloom Competition - **Best Sustainable Food Producing Garden**. This will promote more awareness of the value of fresh, healthy and locally produced food and hopefully lead to more resilient communities.

Neighbourhood in Bloom Returns for 2025

Following the overwhelming success of last year's **Neighbourhood in Bloom** competition, we are delighted to announce its return for 2025. This much-loved initiative celebrates the dedication and creativity of our **residents**, bringing communities together through a shared passion for gardening.

This year, participants will once again have the opportunity to showcase their green-fingered skills across five exciting categories: **Best Garden, Best Hanging Basket or Pots Display, Best Wildlife Garden, Best Sustainable Food Producing Garden and Best Communal or Community Garden**. Whether you are an experienced gardener or just starting out, this competition is a fantastic way to enhance your outdoor space and contribute to a greener, more vibrant neighbourhood.

To recognise and reward outstanding efforts, winners will receive **£50 in vouchers for first place, £25 for second place, and £15 for third place** in each category. A panel of judges will assess the entries, looking for creativity, sustainability, and overall impact on the community.

Entries must be submitted by **30 June 2025**, with winners being contacted in August. If you would like to take part or need further details, please contact **Tina Browne** on **01562 733121 or 07980 862767**, or email customerengagement@communityhousing.co.uk.

Get your gardens ready and look out for our posters promoting the event across the community. This competition is open to everyone, and we look forward to seeing our communities bloom once again!

Wyre Forest Cycle Forum

Creating safer routes for local people

You really can save £thousands every year by switching from a car to a bike

It sounds too good to be true but by avoiding having as many cars as adults at your home you can make big savings fast. In an economic world of uncertainty with ongoing pressures on real incomes this is an untrumpable way to have noticeably more money for the things you really want to do.

Cars sitting on drives are a wasted asset but there is a better way and more and more people are doing it. In Germany electric bikes are already seen by many as useful alternatives to cars for commuting. The market for electric bikes there is forecast to grow by 5% a year while the number of private cars is forecast to shrink by as much as 25%.

Car tax is changing - and going up here on 1 April 2025 - in some cases to eye watering levels. Car insurance renewal inflation is often mind-bogglingly high.

Meanwhile bicycles are getting even cheaper. The UK Government has just removed tariffs on legal, non-folding e-bikes made in China. This means average price reductions of around £200. There is also a glut of bikes worldwide. High levels of production make life difficult for retailers - but good news for the rest of us as there are great value new and second-hand bikes out there.

Why your other car being a bike makes economic sense...

- Avoid all of the big costs of running a car – car tax, insurance, fuel and more
- Avoid large monthly lease payments - or the hidden significant depreciation costs
- Avoid the struggle with car parking machines and car park payment problems
- Avoid the time wasted and the hassle of trying to get a good car insurance deal each year
- If you really need a car for a special occasion you can still hire one or use a taxi with a small part of the money you are saving each year
- Bikes are cheap, cost little to run and nothing to park. If you want, you can still enjoy the peace of mind of 3rd party insurance cover in case you ever cause an accident - and a free cycling related legal advice line - for less than £5 a month via cycling charity Cycling UK.

Why not join us?

Wyre Forest Cycle Forum works to improve cycling infrastructure across Wyre Forest district. The next Wyre Forest Cycle Forum Meeting is on Thursday 3rd April 2025 2pm Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way DY11 7WF

We hope to have the Wyre Forest 3 Towns Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan by then. To find out more email: info@wyreforestcycling.co.uk

Climate and Nature Bill and local MPs

Friends of the Earth Link for Wyre Forest, Roger Meade has been having an interesting exchange with our local MP on such matters and thought you might like to see his latest letter, below. Several of us have written to Mark Garnier asking him to support the bill and he has declined to do so, giving a range of reasons, most of which Roger has quoted below in blue. *Please note that WFGA is non-party political and we urge MPs of all parties to support the bill which we believe is more important than party politics.*

Dear Mr Garnier

Last week I was given a copy of a letter you wrote to at least two of your constituents, who had asked you to support the Climate and Nature Bill. Your response reframes the climate and nature conversation in ways that many of your constituents would not recognise. Extracts from your letter (attached in full) are given below in blue font, followed by comments that I feel would be widely shared by the environmentally concerned people of Wyre Forest. What is written here will appear in the Wyre Forest Green Alliance newsletter as will your subsequent response if you feel you would like to provide one.

“Setting ever-stricter, centralised targets risks making energy unaffordable and causing unnecessary hardship for British people.”

You refer here to risk. Is there any evidence that energy is becoming more expensive due to anything other than international politics? As the proportion of energy from wind and solar increases it is just as likely that the unit cost will fall, even though there will be increased costs for improved infrastructure in the short term.

I am told that, according to The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero’s [most recent projections for Britain](#), solar output cost from new projects now averages £41 per megawatt hour (MWh). For new gas power stations, the equivalent lifetime costs will be close to £114 per MWh. The reason why we are not seeing an immediate drop in energy costs is that the rate to consumers is set by the cost of the gas-fired power stations, the most expensive electricity on the UK market.

Locally, I have not yet seen a single array of solar panels on any of the new-builds close to the junction of Kidderminster Road and the Bewdley bypass. When coupled to a storage battery, I have found that the only electricity costs in the summer months are from the standing charge, and there is income from the exported surplus. Why are solar panels not mandatory in new-build houses? When bought in bulk by developers and fitted as part of the roof, the proportion of the total cost of building the dwelling must be negligible. If groups such as Friends of the Earth and others in the Wyre Forest Green Alliance were to put even more effort into more publicity about this, would you support it?

“If businesses are forced to meet increasingly expensive Net Zero targets, many will relocate to countries like China, which rely heavily on coal for energy. This approach would cost British jobs, hurt workers and their families, and undermine our economy.”

Is there any evidence of such effects on businesses due to Net Zero targets? The factors working against business that I have seen in the media are more often related to Brexit than anything to do with energy. Steel and those depending on it are a possible exception, because of a transition from blast to electric arc furnaces, though once installed they will be ahead of the game. The change will be associated with a reduced workforce, but such changes have always been inevitable in a constantly shifting world. These have to be managed by government, and Mrs Thatcher was no stranger to the task. She presided over the demise of the seriously polluting and uneconomic coal industry, and presumably you supported her at the time. There was no such deference to the plight of the potentially unemployed miners as I remember, either in South Wales or South Yorkshire, two places in which I worked over the timespan of the strike and knew fairly well.

[The North Sea oil and gas sector supports 200,000 jobs and generates billions in tax revenue, which could be used to protect nature and invest in low-carbon innovation. Abandoning it would damage both our economy and our energy security.](#)

This is in my view a particularly specious argument. It has already happened to all sorts of industries; are you advocating that we should veto any change in the energy sector for the reasons you give? This has never been the case in the past, as British Leyland and the car industry found in previous decades. The past is littered with instances where the government has chosen not to bail out industries that need to be modernised. The same is now happening in the energy industry, and we need to create new jobs in renewables rather than jump on the bandwagon of the job protectionists.

I am told there were already 247,000 jobs in the UK Renewable Energy Industry by 2021, generating tax revenue, and this figure keeps growing so there will be many new opportunities to

provide employment for those currently employed in the fossil fuel sector, many of whom have the same skill-sets that it needs.

In case this comes over as harsh and dismissive of other people's problems, I left home at age eighteen to find employment in the pharmaceutical industry, about 90 miles away, while most of my contemporaries were similarly migrating to universities. It has been the same pattern for my own family ever since, and we have moved at least five times across England and Wales to follow career opportunities. The notion that jobs have to be created in a particular place because people cannot move is untrue and impractical. There is, in my opinion, no compelling reason, perhaps apart from the appealing Welsh concept of 'hiraeth', why we should encourage others to expect it in an economically demanding world.

As for the tax revenue from hydrocarbon extraction being used to protect nature, it reminds me of the pre-Brexit, Johnson-era bus advertisement that all the money not paid to the EU would solve all our problems in the NHS. Recent history suggests otherwise, especially with increasing spend on defence.

["This Bill also duplicates existing legislation, such as the Environment Act, which already requires ambitious nature recovery targets, including halting the decline of species by 2030. While I support strong action to protect ecosystems, introducing overlapping requirements risks creating confusion without additional benefits."](#)

We all hope the Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be successful. Beyond hope, it has to be pointed out that setting targets is the easy bit, achieving them is a little more complex and by no means guaranteed. From my own past experience in statutory nature conservation I see LNRs as the latest in a long line of targets, perhaps the most recent before them being Biodiversity Action Plans. Each sequence starts with a review, during which time little is done, to be followed by cherry-picking the easy bits, such as re-introducing a few 'shop window' species. Then it gets down to the nitty gritty, such as restoring sustainable groundwater abstraction, all allegedly too expensive, followed by much breast-beating, scrapping the targets and starting the process all over again. We could argue that something new is achieved at each turn of the wheel, but we cannot be complacent when our natural world is still in decline.

Without the CAN Bill do you really think things will change? It is able to provide a legal framework for achieving nature recovery and this is why it was, and still is, important.

I hope you will find time to visit the Wild Photographer of the Year Exhibition at Birmingham Art Gallery. The poignancy of the contrast between the eleventh-hour photographic excellence and the fragility of the subjects comes across strongly. The winner was a close-up of a spring-tail and a slime mould, both lowly minute creatures essential in maintaining the soil in good health to benefit us humans. Not many people have heard of them, but what would we do without them?

["Binding Ministers to rigid carbon budgets risks forcing policies that harm British workers and stifle innovation. Instead, we should empower businesses to innovate and develop the technologies that will enable other countries, especially coal-reliant economies, to reduce their emissions. That is how the UK can lead on climate change."](#)

What sort of empowerment did you have in mind? Government subsidy? By repute, this is hardly one we associate with the Conservative Party. I would have thought the prospect of clear government policy would be a more powerful driver and that is why we need the legally binding targets as would be set out in the CAN Bill. You point out that our contribution to greenhouse gases worldwide is minimal, and yet you must think we can still influence others if we don't 'walk the walk'. Of course we should develop exportable technologies but it will not happen without incentive, and that's where benchmarks like the CAN Bill come in.

Understanding the ebb and flow of a fickle electorate is beyond me, but it looks as if some political factions are capitalising on the feelings of those who resent any sort of imposition from above, choosing to ignore that climate change and nature loss are far greater threats to our way of life in the long term. One just has to cling to the hope that maintaining a habitable planet transcends the human instinct to hold on to or grasp power at any cost.

Yours sincerely

Roger Meade
Wyre Forest Friends of the Earth Link

Spotlight on: Repair Cafes

In October 2024 Bewdley Repair Cafe took part in **International Repair Day 2024 which was a huge success**. This year's Repair Day took on an even more global dimension than ever before, with events around the world from the UK to Taiwan to Benin to Argentina to Aotearoa New Zealand to Moldova to France to India and more... See [link](#)

The result was that communities came together to celebrate repair at 2,000 events in over 40 countries! There were 120 events in the UK alone this year.

Another huge landmark of the Repair Day period was the 15th birthday of Repair Cafe International. In the Netherlands, they held an XL repair cafe in The Hague which saw one hundred repairers gather to repair over two hundred items! Worth noting that in 2023, Bewdley Repair Café alone repaired nearly 200 items in one session as part of a national Repair Café celebration.

The first Repair Day events ever in many countries including: youth maker clubs in Moldova, a repair shop opening in Macedonia, and celebrations in Ukraine, Slovenia, Croatia, Poland, Monaco, Austria, Hungary and Iceland. In Ghana, Benin, Kenya and Uganda events took place to further repair education, including refugee communities and school children. Repair Cafe Collective India ran a series of workshops across the country to teach children about different kinds of repair.

An appeal for more volunteers.

Bewdley Repair Café meets on the 3rd Saturday of each month from 10.0 – 2.0 in St Georges Hall. Although we are well blessed with wonderful skilled repairers, we still need more.

At our last session in January 2025, we dealt with over 100 items brought in for repair or sharpening. Although we managed to look at nearly all of the items with an 80% success in repairing or sharpening them, at one time we had nearly 20 customers waiting while all our repairers were busy with other repairs.

Inevitably, at every session a few of our repairers are unable to come. We would love to have more volunteers who we can call on. Items brought for repair include electrical appliances such as vacuum cleaners, toasters, heaters, radios and lamps. We also repair clocks, small furniture, dolls and many other things beside. If you think that you could help with any of these please do get in touch. We also need people to join our team sharpening garden tools, kitchen knives etc. Training can be given for sharpening.

To find out more, please contact John Rhymer at john.rhymer50@gmail.com