

# Sustainability Newsletter

Issue 9: May 2021

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## Take steps to protect what you love with Count Us In



Count Us In is an international movement, calling on people to take at least one of the 16 highest impact carbon-cutting steps between now and the COP26 climate talks in November. St Albans district now has its own ['Count Us In' page](#) where your actions can add up to something bigger.

Register and choose a step today! On the page, you can see how many people in the District are taking action, and what it all adds up to. When you register, tick to select that you are part of the St Albans Climate Action Network team, and get counted! #StAlbansCAN

# PLEASE DON'T FEED THE DUCKS

**If you are a visitor to Verulamium Park you will have spotted our 'Please don't feed the ducks signs' which were designed by local school children. We understand that for many families, there is a fond tradition of visiting the lakes to feed the birds. They seem to like being fed but this practice is actually harmful to wildlife.**

A nutritionally balanced diet for wildfowl, consists of a variety of grains and grasses, aquatic plants and insects that are found in the wild. The bread, crackers and other human foods that people feed them, is low in nutrition and with so many people feeding them this 'junk food', it can end up becoming the bulk of their diet. This creates a variety of nutritional disorders. The junk food creates calcium deficiencies which makes their bones and joints form incorrectly and fracture. This makes them too weak to compete for food and defend themselves, which makes them more vulnerable to attack.

Ducks and geese also suffer with 'angel wing' which means their feathers twist upwards because they have grown abnormally quickly due to a diet too high in protein.

Because bread expands in their stomachs, they can feel artificially full and not be motivated to search for 'real' food.

As more birds flock to places where people are providing junk food, space becomes limited and overcrowding can occur. It's not natural for small places like Verulamium to provide so much food, and birds can become stressed due to lack of space and heightened competition.

Bear in mind that a junk food diet weakens birds and so they are also less equipped to deal with competition, aggression and conflict with other birds. When there is overcrowding, females can be attacked by competing males. This can cause females to nest far from the water which puts them more at risk from urban predators, vehicle collisions and other dangers they wouldn't normally encounter in their natural nesting area.

Thanks but that bread makes me feel a bit icky!





# PLEASE DON'T FEED THE DUCKS

Overcrowded habitats such as parks rife with bird feeding, are susceptible to disease outbreaks. The competition for poor quality food, the stressful conditions, conflict with other birds, and the degraded environments, suppress birds immune systems, which means they are less able to fight disease.

Birds don't eat everything that is offered to them. The soggy uneaten bread rots, creating odours, and adding nutrients to the lake which, in addition to all the extra faeces created from the junk food, cause algae overgrowth in the lakes in summer. This reduces oxygen levels, crowds out plants and suffocates fish. Some algae is even toxic to wildlife and pets.

A carbohydrate-rich diet leads to greater amount of bird faeces, which can harbour bacteria responsible for diseases such as avian botulism. This created bird deaths a few years ago.

Mouldy bread can cause aspergillosis, a fatal lung infection that can decimate entire duck and waterfowl flocks.

You may have noticed that often the grass is destroyed around the lakes. This is because of the artificially high numbers of Canada Geese which like to graze on the grass.

In the wild, these birds have a healthy fear of humans and predators. This keeps them safe. Whilst we all appreciate having more contact with the natural world, it's imperative that we look after these wild populations by keeping a distance and letting them go about their business with as little interference from humans as possible.

**The best thing we can all do for the birds and the lake ecosystem, is to sit back and enjoy watching them. There is plenty of food in their natural habitat, they will not go hungry without us.**



# WORKING TOGETHER TO RE-WILD ST ALBANS



**Rewilding St Albans is a new partnership between St Albans City and District Council and Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust that aims to empower local people to take action for wildlife. There will be ways for everyone to get involved.**

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust has completed a full audit of the District's habitats and species. The next step will see the development of a Wilder St Albans Plan, which will set out potential opportunities to improve biodiversity and wildlife habitats across the District.

Some larger-scale projects are already underway. These include preparations for the reintroduction of 150 water voles to the River Ver later in the year and the 'wilding' of some of our open spaces by changing the mowing regimes.

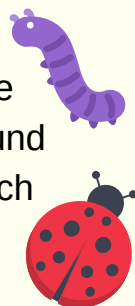
We want to support individuals to go 'wilder'. To help, we have created the Wilder St Albans website which is crammed full of resources and toolkits. So whether you want to know how to build a pond, how to compost, make a hedgehog highway with your neighbours or volunteer for a local group, there is plenty of information to inspire you.

The Wilder St Albans Facebook Group is a great place to share ideas, ask questions, learn from other 'wilder' enthusiasts.

**Come and say hi to Heidi Carruthers, the Wilder St Albans People and Wildlife Officer for HMWT. She will be launching the project at St Albans Sustainable Market on Sunday 23 May 2021, as part of the Sustainability Festival 2021.**

## How Wild Are We Now?

We are appealing for people to take notice of the wildlife they have around them now so we can track how much 'wilder' we become.



A fun 60 minute 'How Wild Are We?' survey will be launched on 23rd May for people to record what they can see from their windows, balconies, gardens or school grounds. The survey includes a

bird watch, bug hunt, flower walk and pond dip. The survey can be completed on any warm and sunny day between Sunday 23rd May and Sunday 6th June. You can submit your results online.



To take part in the survey or sign up to the Wilder St Albans e-newsletter, please visit:  
[www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbands](http://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/wilderstalbands)







# GET INVOLVED TO HELP YOUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

**The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many challenges over the last year. However, during this time, our local parks, green spaces and countryside have become a lifeline for all of us.** As a result of the national lockdowns and restrictions, many of us have spent more time in nature than ever before, whether it was our garden or taking a daily stroll, run or cycle in the local park or countryside.

There is no doubt that for many people, the lockdowns have brought a new appreciation for nature, and for some, they have been an opportunity to discover greenspaces and nature in their local area for the first time. Certainly, nature has had an essential role in maintaining our physical and mental well-being.

Sadly, the vast increase in visitors has also put our greenspaces under huge pressure, which also impacts our local wildlife. We've seen an increase in littering and fly tipping in particular. The Council's park rangers have worked tirelessly to ensure that our greenspaces are kept as safe, tidy and enjoyable places to visit. We also really appreciate your support. More of you have been volunteering your support to take care of the environment and pick up litter.

If you enjoy spending time outdoors, perhaps you would also like to play a part in helping to look after them. There are many groups and organisations that you can volunteer with, including the

Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service, the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust as well as a number of 'Friends of' and community groups in your local area.

Please check with these organisations directly for volunteering opportunities as restrictions are lifted. There will also be many events and activities that you can get involved in during the Sustainability Festival 2021 or you may wish to sign up to the Great British Spring Clean.

If you would like to do some litter picking in one of St Albans City and District Council's parks or open spaces, we can provide equipment. This can also be arranged by contacting Communities 1st. Or, for litter picking in other parts of the District, you can obtain equipment and support by contacting our Waste Management Team.

“ Make a difference to others and help improve the area where you live ”



(Picture taken before social distancing requirements!)



# PAY-PER-HOUR ELECTRIC VEHICLES COMING TO ST ALBANS

**Enterprise Car Club has joined forces with the Council to set up a new car club that gives local residents, businesses, visitors, and Council staff easier access to electric vehicles on a pay-per-hour basis.**

The scheme, which is being piloted for 1 year, will see 2 cars (parked behind Ladbrokes on St Peters Street) available 24/7 to Enterprise Car Club members. Membership not only gives you access to these vehicles, but to another 1,400 vehicle's across the UK.

The vehicles can be rented from as little as £6.20 per hour and are available for anyone over the age of 19. As a special incentive to trial the new service, residents and business workers can join the club for only £10 in the first year, a saving of £50, and also receive £10 free driving credit\*. Simply use code '**STALBANS**' when joining the standard annual plan.

Whilst we await the installation of the electric charging posts, Enterprise will provide 2 hybrid vehicles: one Toyota and one Kia. These vehicles typically run on an electric motor for short, slower trips in and around town, reducing the impact of emissions. Hybrids then switch to a petrol engine for longer journeys on faster main roads.

Once the electric charging infrastructure has been installed, the hybrids will be replaced by two fully electric Nissan Leafs. These vehicles produce zero tailpipe emissions and have a range of 150 miles when fully charged.

For many people, this will herald the beginning of a new era when car ownership isn't essential for getting around. We hope as more people use these vehicles we will be able to build a case to install more pay-per-hour vehicles across the District for people to use - saving residents money, reducing the space needed on our streets for privately owned cars and bringing down air pollution and carbon emissions.

To find out more and become a member: [www.EnterpriseCarClub.co.uk/STALBANS](http://www.EnterpriseCarClub.co.uk/STALBANS)

\*First year's membership included for £10 (usually £60). £10 driving credit, valid for 90 days, applied once application is approved. Valid for St Albans District residents, businesses, workers and visitors until 31/12/2022.



# CLOSE YOUR STREET FOR CAR FREE DAY- 22ND SEPT

**22 September 2021 is World Car Free Day, when all around the world towns and cities allow people to experience streets free of traffic. It's a great chance to re-imagine our streets without cars, connect with our neighbours and let the children play out.**

In St Albans district, the Playing Out project is encouraging streets to join in with World Car Free day by applying to close their road to through traffic on a date near 22nd September, particularly on Saturday 18th or Sunday 19th September.

Come along to a free information session on Zoom on the following dates to find out more:

- Friday 28th May at 10.30am
- Monday 21st June at 8pm
- Wednesday 23rd June at 10.30am

During a Playing Out session, children come out to cycle, scoot and play together in their street while neighbours have a chance to chat and get to know one another.

It is a fabulous way to build communities and to give children a chance to play in the fresh air near their homes.

Under the Council-supported Playing Out scheme, residents of non-bus routes in St Albans District can apply to close their road up to 8 times a year for 3 hours at a time.

You must consult all the neighbours in your street before applying and the deadline for applications is Monday 12th July if you want to close your road in September or beyond.

The Playing Out team provides support and equipment and the scheme is cost-free for residents. Their webpages are full of step-by-step information about how to apply, including template letters to neighbours, and you can sign up to their mailing list for updates.

For more information and to book a spot at an information session, visit [www.sustainablestalbans.org/playingout](http://www.sustainablestalbans.org/playingout).





# St Albans Sustainability Festival 2021 is nearly here!

**St Albans District's Sustainability Festival is back this May with a packed two weeks of over 150 Covid-safe events to encourage everyone to live more sustainably and connect with nature.**

St Albans Sustainable Market will kick off the festival on Sunday 23rd May, then the fortnight-long festival will follow with dozens of sustainability-related events put on by local community groups, businesses and faith groups across St Albans, Harpenden and the villages.

Events include guided walks, films, craft sessions, online workshops and talks. From local trees to hedgehogs, reusable nappies to wildlife gardening, solar panels to cooking demos there is something for everyone to enjoy whatever your age or interests.

Thousands of children from schools, Scouting, Guiding and other youth groups across the district will be involved in SustFest21 Schools Week 24-28th May

St Albans City & District Council will be giving an online presentation for SustFest21 on Wednesday 2nd June at 7.30pm about sustainability at the Council. Learn about our Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy and how we deliver our services in a sustainable way. Ask decision-makers about topics that matter most to you.

**For all the information and to book the events, visit:**

[www.sustfest.org](http://www.sustfest.org).

Twitter: @SustFest21

Instagram: @sustainablesta

Facebook;

@SustainableStAlbans

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## Please complete and share the Resident's Climate Emergency survey

If you care about tree planting, bike racks, 20s plenty, planning rules, or EV car charging, this survey is for you!

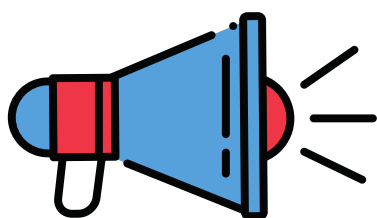
Sustainable St Albans are asking what action local residents think is needed in the District.

Complete it here, with a chance for a £100 random prize, and please share the link:

[bit.ly/StAclimatesurvey](https://bit.ly/StAclimatesurvey)

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## St Albans Climate Action Network Need You!



The Council, Sustainable St Albans, St Albans Friends of the Earth and other groups are coming together under the umbrella of St Albans Climate Action Network to deliver engagement activities across the community in the run up to COP26 climate talks.

We would love to hear from you if you can help; writing a blog, helping with social media, researching or more: [info@sustainablestalbans.org](mailto:info@sustainablestalbans.org)

## Reducing our use of Glyphosate

Glyphosate is a widely used herbicide which is in many weed killers. Concerns have been raised about the environmental and health impacts of this chemical and so the Council has been reviewing how we might be able to reduce its use and instead focus on chemical-free methods of weed control.

Currently, our grounds maintenance contractor, John O'Conner uses glyphosate to spot treat weeds in parks, green spaces and public realm including highways for Hertfordshire County Council. We can't change this contract until 2024, but

we are discussing integrated weed management processes to reduce the amount of chemicals needed to control the weeds. The success of these different techniques will be closely monitored and where appropriate rolled out to more sites.

Whilst we may have all become accustomed to seeing weed free pavements and roadside verges, weeds can provide valuable habitats for insects and pollinator species. There can be benefits in letting them grown. Some weeds, like Dandelion, have traditionally been used as a herbal

medicine and can be added to salads and stir fries.

We will be trialing different weed control methods in different areas, and encouraging local residents to help out by notifying us of weed growth that may cause health and safety issues. Please also let us know where you would like to see sites improved for insects and pollinator species as part of the re-wilding campaign.



## Express Your Interest in a locked On-Street Bicycle Hangar

Do you live in a terraced house or a block of flats with little access to secure bicycle storage facilities? We are gathering views from residents who would support

the introduction of a secure on-street bicycle hangar on their street. To express interest please visit

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/walking-and-cycling>



This newsletter contains information about living more sustainably and is brought to you by the Sustainability Team at St Albans City and District Council. The information provided is not an endorsement of any of the products, sources of information or organisations mentioned.

For inquiries or comments, please contact [sustainability@stalbands.gov.uk](mailto:sustainability@stalbands.gov.uk).