Council – 10th June 2026 **ITEM 11**

Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council

Report: Nature Village

Report authors: Andy Martin/Adam Sofianos

Purpose of the Report

To update members on recent discussions with BCP Council and the Parks Foundation regarding ecological matters, to outline a proposal to designate Highcliffe & Walkford as a 'Nature Village', and to seek the Council's agreement to develop this opportunity with a view to implementation in autumn 2026.

---

1. Background

Highcliffe & Walkford has a unique natural environment with numerous open spaces, the most unspoiled coastline in the whole of BCP, a unique green ecological corridor, the second highest level of tree canopy cover of any ward in the conurbation, a number of nature reserves, many woodland areas, and a rich and remarkable abundance of wildlife and flora.

The rich wildlife includes deer, badgers, otters, hedgehogs, foxes, a huge variety of birds including many endangered species, 13 species of bats and much more.

The Living Record database (which is not comprehensive), and drawn-out records for the parish area since 2010 onwards, show over 1300 species across various groups formally recorded here in that time - this is about 25% of what has been recorded across the whole BCP area. A list of all 1300 is available to view.

All this in a country that is one of the most nature-depleted in the world.

2. About the Nature Village designation

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Parish Council recently met with BCP Council officers, and representatives of the Parks Foundation, to develop ideas to promote and protect and enhance our natural habitats and species. A key feature of this is the potential designation of the parish as a Nature Village.

The aim of the designation is to:

- Celebrate our natural environment.
- Embed nature recovery.
- Improve biodiversity.
- Improve access to nature.
- Improve health and wellbeing in a way that only nature can do.
- Raise awareness among residents and visitors.
- Encourage residents to play their part in private gardens.
- Give our parish a special environmental identity.
- Encourage community groups, individuals and our schools and businesses to create wildlife-friendly spaces and be part of the project.
- Build on the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and update it.

The Nature Village designation is an informal one, has no legal status and does not require us to gain permission from anyone. It is simply a community-led initiative, which would be backed by the Environment and Countryside teams from BCP Council, who have offered their support. This designation would be unique in BCP.

Some of the key elements in H&W Nature Village could be:

- Information and interpretation boards around the parish, outlining the flora and fauna of different areas.
- Signage on roads branded Highcliffe & Walkford - Nature Village
- Ongoing Press and publicity campaign
- Residents asked to do their bit in their own spaces with a list of suggestions that we will publish and publicise.
- Working with our schools and community groups to encourage environmental awareness and projects big and small.
- Arranging and hosting talks, walks and events throughout the year in conjunction with community groups and organisations like CHAMS and CHOGM, Dorset Wildlife Trust and others.
- Using the designation to drive community action such as litter picks.
- Potential for a mini festival green festival involving the community organisations and schools.
- Opportunities for more green infrastructure such as pollinators and hedgehog tunnels around the village.

3. Financial implications

At this stage no budget is requested. The financial implications will depend on the actions and investments agreed by the Council, and would be subject to existing budgetary limitations.

Initial costs could potentially be limited to the costs of marketing and providing resources for early community activities.

4. Recommendation

Council is asked to:

(a) Note the contents of the report;
(b) Agree to support the Nature Village designation in principle, subject to a final decision at a later date;
(c) Authorise the Chair and Vice Chair to continue discussions with BCP Council and other parties to progress the Nature Villages designation and strategy (with a proposal to return to Council for a final decision by autumn 2026).