GREAT COLLABORATION SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2026

Great news from The Great Collaboration
A national resource hub and support network
for collective climate and nature action

SUMMER 2026

Scorchio!

The unheralded second heatwave of the year - with more promised to come - is a timely prod to revisit our community emergency plans.

This is a heatwave summer special, also including the impact on wildlife and what we might do about that.



Image courtesy Communities Prepared

Preparation for heatwaves

Heatwaves look like becoming a regular feature of British summers. Our first red warning for heat this June should be giving us pause for thought, and the 40 degrees Celsius being experienced in Europe could yet become a regular reality here.

There is more detail about a response to heatwaves on our Great Collaboration Knowledgebase, but some simple steps to share when heatwaves are imminent:

- **Check weather and travel warnings**
- **Check your building's heating is turned off**
- **Check that your fridges, freezers and fans are working properly.**
- **Ensure that family, friends and neighbours who may be at higher risk of becoming unwell are aware of, and following, actions to keep themselves safe.**
- **Drink plenty of fluids. If you are going out, take a refillable bottle filled with water (and if you have a public building, offer free water refills to passers by - see advice and networking through Refill Return from Ecosurety).**
- **Keep out of the sun between 11am and 3pm when UV levels are highest - within a cool building if possible (identify and publicise cool buildings locally)**
- **Schedule physical activities for times of the day when it is cooler, such as the morning or evening.**
- **Keep your home cool by shading and closing windows and curtains, especially in rooms that face the sun, and opening windows when the air feels cooler (e.g., at night).**

We also need to consider that heatwaves can be followed by storms and floods, so we should be aware of and prepare for those possibilities as well.

Cold Water Shock



There are sadly several stories of people rushing into rivers and streams and getting into difficulties. 47% of UK accidental drownings occur between May and August, when we are most at risk of cold water shock which has three stages:

1. **a similar sensation to getting into a swimming pool, characterised by a gasp for breath, then followed by rapid breathing (hyperventilation).**

2. **as your breathing goes out of control, your blood pressure shoots up as your body tries to keep your blood warm by moving it towards the middle of your body (this is why you go pale when you're cold).**

3. **as your muscles cool, your strength, endurance and muscle control reduce to the point when you can't swim any longer, so you can't rescue yourself. The point at which you can't swim any more is called 'swim failure', and if you haven't got out of the water or managed to get hold of a buoyancy aid (like a lifejacket) by this time, you will drown.**

Safety advice says don't jump straight into unknown water but enter gradually, wearing protective and visible gear if possible. If you get into difficulties, don't thrash around but float on the surface until your breathing recovers, and call for help. If you see someone in difficulties, don't jump in yourself but throw them something that floats - best of all, never go wild swimming on your own.

Heatwaves and Wildlife



Image by Jon Pauling from Pixabay

Don't scare the ducks!

Local wildlife do not need to be disturbed by people jumping into their homes…. Be aware of wildlife in streams, lakes and rivers, and follow any warning signs. There's been controversy at Hampstead Heath in London for example, with people ignoring

signs to stay in the designated swim areas, and jumping into the wildlife-only ponds.

The WWF and Treedom have a great deal of advice about how we can help wildlife during heatwaves, including:

- **Provide Water: Ensure shallow bowls or saucers filled with fresh water are available for birds, small mammals, and insects. Change the water daily to keep it clean.**
- **Create Shade: Set up shade structures like umbrellas or canopies in your garden to provide refuge for wildlife. Leave areas of your garden wild to create natural cover.**
- **Offer Food: Leave out food sources like hedgehog food or small amounts of meaty cat or dog food to help animals during heatwaves.**
- **Plant Native Plants: Incorporate native and drought-resistant vegetation into your garden to create essential habitats for wildlife.**
- **Avoid Disturbing Nests: Protect wildlife by avoiding disturbing nests and young animals, and consider leaving areas of your garden unmowed to provide shelter.**

And we need to look after our pets as well! See advice from the charity Blue Cross - provide shade and water, and maybe even forego the daily dog walk.

Emergency Planning

We've already said that storms and floods can follow heatwaves. There's a community emergency plan template online you can use that covers many of the issues also raised in the UK Government's Prepare campaign.
Failing to plan is planning to fail...

Things to look out for this Summer



PEOPLE'S EMERGENCY BRIEFING

As you can see from the above online map, local screenings of the seminal People's Emergency Briefing film are proliferating around the country.

You can find more advice about the film on the Great Collaboration Knowledgebase, including how to turn your own local screening into a springboard for community climate action.

BANTER SESSIONS

Our online banter sessions provide a friendly, cooperative forum to share helpful tips and suggestions, covering a wide range of topics and with plenty of lively discussion! Here's a taster of some forthcoming sessions:

- **July 22nd - Sandy Skelton from Cambridgeshire County Council talking about the Cambridgeshire approach to a Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

- **July 29th - Janet Cobb and Richard Small from the Middle Marches Community Land Trust talking about the Trust's role in nature conservation.**

And if you'd like to talk about your own local successes at one of our regular Wednesday sessions, please contact Graham our session chairman at gcstones52@gmail.com, he'll be delighted to hear from you.

Community Energy Co-ops



Community energy co-ops have the power to change the world, and Co-operatives UK are spotlighting them with a series of FREE lunchtime webinars during Community Energy Fortnight, 1st – 14th July.

Community Energy is all about bringing people together, installing local renewable energy assets like solar panels, and then bringing the benefits back into the community. Whether you're climate conscious or curious about co-ops, join in some inspiring and powerful conversations and learn more about community energy co-ops! https://www.uk.coop/start-new-co-op/discover-co-op

A Greater Collaboration

The Great Collaboration began life within the Herefordshire Green Network.

Since then we have extended its reach more widely, by:

- **adding collective actions to the individual actions on the website**
- **developing new self-help networks in Essex and Norfolk, supported by online forums using the free social software Hylo**
- **starting the process for further networking in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, with early discussions in other counties including Buckinghamshire**
- **creating the Great Collaboration Knowledgebase with a continually-extending range of action advice as well as recordings of our weekly banter sessions**
- **beginning the process of digital mapping of local projects, giving easy and visible access to activity around the country**

If you would like to work with us to help develop an environmental and nature recovery network in your own county, or to get involved in the development of our central services and communication, please email us via hello@greatcollaboration.uk - we look forward to hearing from you!



Looking For Help?

We are a collective of community leaders, councillors, clerks, club representatives and charity trustees working to deliver this essential service to accelerate council and community climate and nature action.

If you need advice to overcome a barrier to achieving action in your community, get in touch. Between us, we can cover a range of topics including:

- **Reaching out to your community**
- **Fundraising**
- **Managing new projects**
- **Working with your local council**
- **Opportunities for town and parish councils**

Tell us about your own collaborations

We're keen to hear about collective action in your community!



Are you developing a community energy project - or creating a local nature action plan? Becoming a bee-friendly parish?

Tell us your story! Join our weekly Zoom sessions, or get in touch by email.

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Together, we can make a difference.