

## Reporting Period: 2026-29

### 1. About the Biodiversity Aspects of the Gladestry Community

The Gladestry community is a dispersed rural area in Radnorshire, Powys, lying close to the border with England. It extends across a varied upland landscape of rolling hills, sheltered valleys, farmland, small woodlands and open countryside. The village of Gladestry sits near the end of Hergest Ridge and to the south of the wider moorland and upland area of Radnor Forest, giving the community a distinctive setting of broad views, high ground and quiet pastoral landscapes. Watercourses also shape the area, with the River Arrow (Afon Arwy) and local brooks and streams, including Gladestry Brook (Afon Gwyddel), helping to define the valleys and lower-lying land within the community.

In addition to the main village of Gladestry (Llanfair Llythynwg), our community includes the settlements of Colva (Colfa), Michaelchurch-on-Arrow (Llanfihangel Dyffryn Arwy), Newchurch (Llannewydd) and Brilley Mountain. These villages and hamlets are linked by a network of lanes, rights of way and field patterns that reflect the area's agricultural character. Together they form a sparsely populated but distinctive borderland community, where the natural environment — including hillsides, streams, hedgerows, pasture and scattered woodland — is central to local identity and biodiversity.

Significant areas of ecological interest within the Gladestry Community include:

- **Glascwm and Gladestry Hills SSSI** — The easternmost ridges of the Glascwm and Gladestry Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) cross directly into the Gladestry Community boundary, blanketing the upland landscape with an expansive, semi-natural ecosystem. This portion of the protected site is legally designated and managed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) primarily for its vast tracts of dry dwarf-shrub heath land. Across this high common land plateau, common heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) thrives as the absolute dominant plant species. It forms a complex, ericaceous mosaic alongside other specialised upland shrubs, including bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), and cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*). This undisturbed heather canopy serves a vital ecological function, acting as the primary breeding territory, nesting cover, and seasonal food source for a nationally monitored population of red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus scotica*).

To preserve the delicate ecological equilibrium within the Gladestry Community boundary, NRW manages the site under strict conservation mandates. Upland common land habitats face severe degradation if left unmonitored, which is why NRW works closely with local commoners and landowners through environmental frameworks. Management is primarily delivered via targeted agri-environment initiatives, such as the Sustainable Farming Scheme and specialised commons contracts. These frameworks carefully regulate livestock grazing densities to prevent both overgrazing — which converts complex dwarf-shrub heath into coarse, species-poor grassland — and undergrazing, which allows invasive bracken to choke out the younger, nutrient-rich heather shoots required by the red grouse population.

- **Rivers and minor watercourses** — The network of rivers and minor watercourses flowing through the Gladestry Community area — most notably Gladestry Brook and the River Arrow — acts as a vital life support system that anchors the region’s local biodiversity. These clean, oxygen-rich upland streams carve out a dynamic network of aquatic and riparian habitats, bridging the gap between the high moorland massifs of the Glascwm and Gladestry Hills SSSI and the lower river valleys.

The gravelly stream beds and riffles provide essential spawning grounds for native fish species like brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), while simultaneously nurturing dense communities of macroinvertebrates, including highly sensitive stonefly and caddisfly larvae. This rich aquatic food web sustains larger predatory wildlife, offering critical foraging and nesting corridors for kingfishers (*Alcedo atthis*), dippers, and elusive European otters (*Lutra lutra*). Furthermore, the seasonal flooding of these watercourses creates fertile, damp margins and marshy floodplains that support specialised wetland flora and provide prime breeding grounds for amphibians, effectively amplifying the biological richness of the entire borderland ecosystem.

- **Llanhaylow Wood** — Lying just to the north of the village of Gladestry, Llanhaylow Wood is a former Forestry Commission-owned site now managed by the Woodland Trust that was planted with Douglas fir, Japanese larch, western hemlock, oak, Norway spruce and poplars in the mid-1950s. The site has been identified as a planted ancient woodland site, remotely located in undulating countryside extending down a west-facing hillside to Gilwern Brook (Nant Gilwern), which forms part of the community's north-western boundary. It links with ancient woodland outside of its boundaries along the brook.

The previous owner of the wood carried out thinning in the early 1990s and the cleared areas appear to be regenerating well with native broadleaf trees. A network of lightly used permissive footpaths and rides is present throughout the site and there is informal parking for a small number of cars at the southern end. Conservation features of the site include streams and ponds and a wood bank.

## 2. Our Commitment to the Biodiversity of the Community Area

Gladestry Community Council recognises the severe decline of biodiversity in Wales and the importance of healthy, resilient ecosystems for the health and well-being of our community. While this council does not own or manage any physical land, property, or green spaces, we fully embrace our statutory duty under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. We commit to embedding biodiversity considerations into all our functions, decision-making processes, and community projects.

## 3. How We Aim to Meet Our Duty

Because our influence extends beyond direct land management, we will promote biodiversity and ecosystem resilience through the following core functions:

- **Planning Applications:** We will actively scrutinise local planning applications. We will support developments that incorporate nature recovery, protect priority habitats/species, and provide a net benefit for biodiversity.
- **Grants and Funding:** When distributing council grants to local charities, groups, or facility managers, we will embed sustainability and biodiversity criteria into our funding conditions.

- **Community Engagement and Awareness:** We will raise local awareness of nature conservation by partnering with environmental organisations, the Local Nature Partnership (LNP), and Gladestry Church in Wales Primary School. We will use our website, noticeboards, and community events to promote biodiversity, and encourage our community residents to do the same.
- **Procurement and Operations:** We will adopt sustainable procurement practices by choosing local, eco-friendly suppliers, reducing single-use plastics, and avoiding harmful chemicals in any services we procure.

#### **4. Further Compliance Actions**

In addition to the commitments listed in Section 3 above, we will meet our Section 6 legal duties, by:

- Maintaining contact with our regional Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Coordinator, Holly Dillon, LNP Coordinator for Powys.
- Encouraging funding requests from local priority projects we can financially support.

#### **5. Monitoring and Review**

This statement forms part of our ongoing commitment to the Welsh Government's environmental goals. We will review our progress annually and formally update this plan/report every three years as required by legislation.