

East Lothian Climate Hub

SUSTAINING DUNBAR'S PLEDGEHOG PROJECT

www.sustainingdunbar.org/projects/the-pledgehog-project/

Email: jen@sustainingdunbar.org



The Pledgehog project is one brilliant example of how to engage a community in supporting wildlife, by focusing on one well loved animal - the hedgehog.

The Project's purpose

Hedgehogs are now classed as 'at risk of extinction' in the UK and this project was created to raise awareness of the need for hedgehog conservation and inspire local people to make hedgehog friendly improvements to their gardens or outdoor spaces. In turn, when people create more wildlife-friendly gardens and wildlife corridors throughout the town with hedgehogs in mind, this is also of great benefit to all sorts of other animal and insect life too.

As well as being of benefit to hedgehogs and other wildlife, the project also aims to connect communities with this shared interest, helping with social isolation and providing positive health benefits as people spend more time in the natural world.

East Lothian Climate Hub

When it got started and where the idea for the project came from

A gentle evolution

As an individual in the community, Jen Walker became passionate about hedgehog conservation and began by starting up the Facebook Dunbar Hedgehog Group and chatting to others about sightings of these elusive creatures in 2021. She soon realised that little was known about hedgehogs in her local town and began to encourage others to plot sightings on Hedgehog Street's 'Big Hedgehog Map' to start to build up a picture of these endangered mammals across the town.

In 2022, Sustaining Dunbar, a Community Development Trust and Charity officially helped to get The Dunbar Pledgehog Project up and running. The first two night-time trail cameras and tracking tunnels were bought thanks to funding from Dunbar Community Council's 'Community Benefit Fund'. These were lent to local people who wanted to find out if they had hedgehogs visiting their gardens.

Further funding that has been received to support the running of the project

The Dunbar and East Linton Area Partnership then provided funding to run the project throughout 2023, followed by Viridor and SafeDeposit Scotland funding the project for the rest of 2024. The Hugh Fraser Foundation has now funded the running cost to the end of March 2025. Taylor Wimpey has also supplied funding to provide materials for the construction of the hedgehog houses. Jen now works as the Project Officer for a few hours each week.



East Lothian Climate Hub

Importance of partnership working for this project's success

Partnership work has been an important element of the project, and the Project Officer has worked closely with Hedgehog Street, the Dunbar Shed, Taylor Wimpey, East Lothian Countryside Rangers, Friends of Winterfield Park, Dunbar Primary School Nursery, Lammermuir House Care Home, Climate Action East Lothian and Treetek tree surgeons. Jen has worked with a Dunbar Nursery's team in their beehive garden, helping children understand more about hedgehogs, what they eat and doing bug hunts; and has set up night-time trail cameras in the local Care Home and in Belhaven Community garden.



How the project works / key activities and any key learnings

The community has been engaged through a variety of promotional and media activities (social media and traditional media) and engagement at community and partnership events, using pop up stands, information material, Scotia wildflower seed mixes to give out and simple activities for children.

The project benefits from Hedgehog Street providing a wealth of information and resources to provide advice and information about hedgehog conservation which avoids the need to duplicate these locally. Encouraging the use of the Big



East Lothian Climate Hub

Hedgehog Map works really well to provide a local map of sightings to compare year on year.

Giving out night time trail cameras and feeding and water stations each month allows a more individualised approach to providing advice about making gardens more hedgehog friendly.



Any challenges and how these have been addressed

The time available to run the project has been an issue as funding for wages for staff time is hard to get. Going through video footage can be very time consuming and also the physical dropping off and picking up several cameras each month. Battery use in trail cameras has been an issue and the project is now looking at getting funding to buy solar panels for them.

In addition the project doesn't aim to provide a hedgehog rescue service and often gets contacted about sick and injured hedgehogs. Basic advice is provided when able but people are directed to the SSPCA (for collection), Forth



East Lothian Climate Hub

Hedgehog Hospital or The British Hedgehog Preservation Society for more specialist advice.

Why the project is successful: what makes it work well

Many older people understand that they are less likely to see hedgehogs now compared to their during their childhood and many younger people haven't had the opportunity to ever see one. They can get very excited when they do see one which, in turn, inspires them to make positive changes to their outdoor areas. The hedgehog is an iconic, much loved animal which acts as a flagship species to encourage people's motivation to increase biodiversity. Hedgehogs encourage many people to talk to each other and connect communities.

Bringing the project to life

Take a look at the Pledgehog project on one of the Landward's episodes, where you can get a glimpse of changes that are being made around the Dunbar area for Hedgehogs, and hear Jen talk about it first hand. BBC IPlayer Landward 2024 Episode 3

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001yf0t/landward-2024-episode-3>

