

Highnam Parish Council – Environment Working Group Progress

Did you remember to put your clocks forward on the 26th March, when British Summer Time started? Fortunately I have some clever clocks that do it all for me, but the one that always fools me is the clock in the car! Fortunately, our wildlife is never fooled by our artificial times. Hedgehogs still come out at dusk (yes, I've seen them already this year), foxes still roam my lawn around midnight, and the dawn chorus always greets the first rays of sunshine from the east.

The Highnam Environment Working Group (EWG) completed a flurry of clearance work in Lassington Wood during March, to get as much done as possible before the bird nesting season started in earnest. Extra bird boxes have been installed around the village, including two lovely new owl boxes (****ADELE PLEASE CONFIRM!!****). Dead hedges have been installed to define desired pathways and many over-crowded saplings have been culled to ensure the remaining trees and under-storey remain healthy and welcoming to wildlife. Signs have been installed to identify bluebell areas in Lassington Wood, so please avoid trampling the plants if you pass that way on your walks. We are lucky to have a stand of pure English bluebells, rather than the more invasive Spanish variety, so the EWG is doing all it can to protect them. Adele at wildhighnam@gmail.co.uk can give you more information about future work plans, which will restart in late Summer.

We continue being supported by Gloucester's Payback team, who have completed their bramble clearance work around the playing field and clearing the yew trees at Highnam Church of new growth. They have also been busy creating wood chippings and are now helping with the restoration and reinforcement work on pathways through Lassington Wood. As well as chipped wood/bark, we are trialling cockleshells as a surface topping, for the first time. We look forward to seeing how that stands up to the footfall traffic using the wood.

You may recall that, around this time last year, we were fortunate in being allocated several young trees and hedging whips free, by Glos CC. This saved the EWG (and Highnam PC) precious funds, in these difficult economic times. We have recently completed a survey on these trees and whips and can confirm that, with only a handful of losses, they have survived the terrible drought conditions last year and appear to be thriving. We resisted trying to water them as we wanted their roots to dig deep into the soil to find the moisture, not to come up to the surface for artificial watering then getting frazzled in the sun. That strategy seems to have worked well. The wild cherry trees planted in Mary Grove field, dedicated to three former Highnam Scout leaders, are doing particularly well now. By the time you read this, they may well be flowering for the first time.

Two of our pollinator patches, (famous for being mentioned in Gardeners World magazine last year), will be supplemented by additional plug plants this year. We look forward to seeing how our 'laissez-faire' policy on the majority of the areas develops, over the coming months. We loved seeing the bee orchids last year, so are hoping for more exotics in 2023.

The EWG has purchased several pieces of litter-picking equipment that we will happily loan to individuals and groups who wish to help with clearing up our environment. H&S guidance will be given. Please contact Bill Badham, details below, if you wish to borrow the equipment.

If you would like to become involved with helping with any of the EWG's work, or the Heart of Highnam village improvements group, please contact Councillor Bill Badham. cllrillbadham@yahoo.com 01452 247112