

Highnam Parish Council – Environment Working Group Progress

Happy New Year Highnam! I hope the coming 12 months will be kind to you all. As we move into 2023, it's a great time to review everything that the Environment Working Group (EWG) has achieved last year. Fantastic progress has been made in Lassington Wood, John's Wood and the Butterfly Crescent, in clearing seedlings, brambles and saplings, which has opened up the various areas and encouraged a more diverse wildlife and flora spectrum. Dead hedges have been installed in Lassington Wood, to encourage visitors to keep to designated paths and preserve our fragile eco-infrastructure. Woodland steps and handrails have been mended and wood chips used to build up the paths which often get very muddy in winter. Many thanks go to our wonderful Wild Highnam volunteers, who continue to do a fantastic job, with enthusiasm and good humour.

We helped to celebrate the late Queen's Jubilee by planting over 130 hedging whips and trees around the parish, as part of her Green Canopy initiative. Sadly, some suffered during the subsequent hot Summer, when rain was in short supply. However, enough have survived to make a significant difference and supply fruits and berries for our resident and migrant birds in Winter. In Autumn we collected local berries, nuts, acorns and wild flower seeds, and will be growing plants and saplings to supplement the local flora in the coming months. There were plenty of blackthorn fruits left over to make some sloe gin!

Our pollinator patches were extended and gave a particularly good display last Summer, especially the newly-disturbed soil alongside the Oakridge path. It was also lovely to see the bee orchids developing well. Mary Grove field had several cinnabar moth caterpillars on the ragwort and many bats enjoyed the insects that the wild flowers attracted. We even had a lovely piece submitted by a resident to Gardener's World magazine, with a picture of one of the patches. Great to see our hard work acknowledged at a national level.

Another of our 2022 targets was to install more litter and dog-poo bins around the village and you will have seen the new unibins that have arrived this year, which take both types of waste. Sadly, several dog owners continue to let their pets foul footpaths. We have also installed more bird boxes in Lassington Wood and look forward to seeing the new residents move in next Spring.

For this year, we will continue with our Wild Highnam/EWG working parties, throughout the non-nesting season. If you would like to join us and work off those Christmas pudding excesses, you would be very welcome. Refreshments are supplied, so just turn up at the relevant venue with some sturdy boots, gardening gloves and bags of enthusiasm. Adele at wildhighnam@gmail.co.uk can give you more information, should you need it. **Friday 6 Jan** – 1.30 to 3.30 - John's Wood - tree thinning. **Friday 10 Feb** - 1.30 to 3.30 - Lassington Wood – final effort!

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. cllrbillbadham@yahoo.com **01452 247112**