

Highnam Parish Council – Environment Working Group Progress

Autumn is sliding gently into Winter, as Highnam Environment Working Group (EWG) take the opportunity to review what we've achieved this year, and plan what we hope to undertake in 2024. In Spring, following agreement with Tewkesbury BC, we redefined some of the village pollinator patches and agreed the mowing regime for the Summer months. More bird boxes were installed around the village and both woods opened up to encourage more diverse wildlife and flora species. The butterfly crescent was cleared of brambles and invasive saplings, which has encouraged more grasses and wild flowers to grow. A survey has identified 26 different plant species compared to 14 species in previous years, so we must be doing something right! Encouragingly, lots of invertebrates have also been recorded throughout the year, including marble white butterflies, cinnabar moths, grasshoppers, damselflies and various beetles.

Once the birds started nesting we ended our clearance work in the woods, so as not to disturb them. Did you notice the number of sparrow hawks, buzzards and red kite hunting around the parish last Summer? It's pointing again to the whole wildlife ecosystem becoming more balanced locally, with the food chain being sustained throughout.

During the Summer months, with the help of the Gloucestershire Pay Back team, a good start was made on clearing overgrown footpaths around village. We were pleased that several local residents also helped us in this vital work. Later on, using wood chipping, gravel and other recycled waste products, we were also able to build up and reinforce paths in Lassington wood and the right of way leading from Mary Grove field to Lassington Lane. And ten residents were involved in the annual botanical surveys of our pollinator patches – well done to all those involved. The survey showed a significant increase in the variety of wildflowers and grasses in all areas, combined with a good variety of pollinators.

Now that the growing season has ended, and we are focused once again on the improvement of the environment infrastructure, we would welcome your involvement in our planned clearance work around the parish. If you have the energy and time to spare, please think about joining us at one of our Working Parties. Here's what we're planning for the rest of the winter. The usual start time is 1pm, ending at 3.30, with a break for refreshments half-way through – mulled wine (or soft drinks) included!

Friday 1st Dec - Johns Wood clearance

Friday 12 Jan - Lassington Wood (sapling area behind Butterfly Crescent)

Friday 9th Feb - Johns Wood clearance

If you are interested in joining our Working Party volunteers, please email Adele at wildhighnam@gmail.com.

Our major plan for the coming months will be the installation of at least one notice board/nature trail map, to offer visitors and residents a visual indication of the wonderful natural and introduced treasures that we have around the village.

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