



Jubilee Meadow Makers
making space for nature

Stoke Holy Cross Jubilee Meadow

provided for nature and the community by Stoke Holy Cross Parish Council

Parish Council Annual Report May 2024 - Another year of progress

Habitat creation

- 1,300 'in the green' bulbs (Aconites, Bluebell, Snowdrops, Wild Daffodils, Wood anemone) were purchased and planted (January)
- A Rowan tree and Purging Buckthorn hedging (food plant of Brimstone butterflies) planted (November)
- A new wildflower strip created by removing some of the weed suppressant membrane and sowing with hand-collected seed provided by NWT. Seed was also added to existing areas (October)
- A second mini-meadow created using a commercial seed mix near the soakaway (September)
- Green hay was again provided by NWT this year under a project funded by the Norfolk Rivers Trust. This was used to enhance the existing wildflower area along with Yellow rattle seed collected from our own crop. Some seed was also used on the Long Lane verge and cycle track mound (August to September)
- 500 wildflower plug plants delivered by NWT in March as the culmination of the Claylands project were tended by volunteers until they could be planted out (August to September)
- A welcome find on the Meadow was a Bee Orchid - only a single spike but a good addition to the list (June)
- The appearance of more flowers, notably a lot of Yellow rattle, was the result of last years work (May)
- Positive indicators of the increasing biodiversity of the site include: 60 bird species recorded in or from the Meadow, 20 species of butterfly (up from 14 by the end of 2022) with some species such as Gatekeeper having an exceptionally good year (230 compared to 31 sightings in 2022 on the weekly counts) and 140 plant species recorded. Other notable sightings included at least 3 Wasp Spiders, a Norfolk Hawker dragonfly, a colony of Bee Wolf (a mining species of solitary wasp) and two species of small mammal (Bank vole and Field vole) and Toads just love the weed suppressant membrane!
- It was good to see many of the tit boxes we had put up being used by Blue Tits and, although not the intended species, both owl boxes were used by Jackdaws

Habitat management

- Part of the wildflower area was given an early Spring cut using a scythe rather than mechanically mown (March). This is a practice that ideally we could use more in the future but that will be dependant on the availability of people able to do it
- Using willow cuttings from Wheatfen we created a 'living' fence to screen off the water tank (March)
- Locally sourced willow whips have again been used to make tree guards as an alternative to plastic (March)
- Bob the grounds contractor was employed to give the Meadow it's summer cut and lightly harrow to prepare for green hay (August)

- It was initially envisaged that we would extend the wildflower areas in three stages to eventually take most of the site, however this has been reconsidered and it is now proposed that the current grass area is retained with some additional wildflower seeding but essentially as grass with maintained pathways (June)
- Following the previous year's drought and the problem of not having access to water on site, a 1000 litre IBC tank was purchased and installed on the Meadow (June)
- To protect the saplings a program of weeding and mulching was carried out (June)
- A weed suppressant membrane was purchased and laid on the second phase wildflower area to create the bare earth that wildflowers need (April)
- Over the year effort was put in to control certain plants notably thistle and Ragwort
- Species monitoring has continued with weekly butterfly counts in season, regular bird counts and three plant surveys including one carried out by a professional botanist and County Recorder

Public Engagement

- NWT have included a visit to the Meadow on May 29th as part of this year's Wilder Communities event programme
- Using willow cuttings from Wheatfen we created a 'living' wigwam near the soakaway during one of the Meadow Maker sessions (March)
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- Some pallets were used to make Xmas trees for the Meadow (December)
- The delivery by NWT of green hay was turned into a 'Green Hay and Cakes' day with children's activities and the chance to help us seed a new wildflower strip as well as helping to spread the green hay (August)
- The Meadow Makers were nominated for and awarded the 'Making Space for Nature' award in the 2023 Norfolk Biodiversity Awards with the awards ceremony taking place at the Castle (June)
- Directional signs installed to guide people from the car park and play areas (June)
- A second notice board incorporating a sketch map of the site was installed at the entrance to the Meadow from the play area (May)
- At the suggestion of a regular visitor, we acquired two dog water bowls which are filled daily (May)
- A well attended family event was held to fill 'Bugingham Palace' our new bug hotel (May)
- Our first Dawn Chorus walk was held (May)
- Publicity in local newsletters (including front page coverage in Free-for-All), parish notice boards and residents Facebook
- The dedicated website is being maintained

Resources

- A twice monthly programme of work sessions has proved to be successful and we now have a core group of regular volunteers who attend and help maintain and develop the Meadow
- A £300 'In Bloom' grant has been obtained from SNDC which has so far been used to acquire hand tools

Looking forward

- Although we understand that they have not been able to obtain specific funding, NWT are expecting to be able to again provide green hay and hand-collected seed potentially in August, This will be used to develop the area currently under the weed suppressant membrane

- As part of the project last year, The Norfolk Rivers Trust will supply an interpretation board focusing on the restoration of wildflower meadows. The design has been approved and ordered but there has been a delay
- Manage and monitor existing habitat

Helping Our Swifts

- Although not directly part of the Meadow project, the Meadow Makers have been instrumental in supporting a new community project 'Helping Our Swifts' that aims to protect and encourage Swifts by providing nest boxes and raising public awareness
- A grant of £300 obtained from SNDC 'Go For It' scheme towards our Swift project has funded acquisition of 20 boxes. With thanks to Danny Thomas, 6 have been installed so far with the focus on securing the existing colony on Long Lane
- A Swift 'walk' to be led by a local expert is being arranged for June

Dave Jones

On behalf of the Jubilee Meadow Working Group & Jubilee Meadow Makers

10th May 2024