

# Climate Change Working Group

## 7pm on Tuesday 16th January 2024 – The Cannon Inn

Present: Rosemary Walker, Ted Swan, Geraldine Swan and Gill Cameron Webb

Apologies: Chris Lea, Joan Bisseker, Steve Filer, Howard Hughes, and Maz Dufall.

### MINUTES

#### 1. Wild About Devon Event

We were delighted that Newton Poppleford and Harpford won the 'Community of the Year' award at the Wild About Devon Event on 1<sup>st</sup> December for our contribution to bio-diversity during 2023.

#### 2. Webber's Meadow

2.1. Weds 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024 - Ted, Gill and a volunteer planted:

- 5 Cherries and 5 Rowans to replace trees drowned in the Jubilee copse;
- an Alder and a Buckthorn Alder in the south field;
- wildflowers where diggers flattened the wildflower meadow;
- we didn't need to weed the apple orchard as an anonymous person had already done it!

2.2. A date for your diaries – meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> February at 11am in Webber's Meadow:

- to plant five Cherries and five Rowans;
- to shift 3 concrete blocks Ted found (Chris can you bring your sack trolley?);
- Richard Lipczynsky has cut up logs from the bonfire so we'll use these to make a habitat;
- plant a gorse bush (if Chris still has one);
- and to put up the bird box which fell down.

2.3. Should we have a pond in Webber's Meadow

What to do with the depression in Webber's Meadow which floods when the River Otter breaks it's banks? After considering four options the group proposed 'Do Nothing' for the following reasons:

- It's expensive to create a proper pond. The ground would need to be dug out, levelled, given a thick lining of clay and be regularly cleaned as it'll fill up with silt when the river floods;
- Filling in the depression using diggers would also cost money;
- Putting in new drainage channels would need advice from expensive land management experts otherwise there's a danger that the flooding would just go elsewhere, e.g. the orchard could be flooded;
- Do nothing - the depression will keep flooding but will eventually fill up with silt and the new willow whips will suck up more and more of the ground water. Eventually this will create a habitat for moisture loving plants

*Post Meeting Note – The Parish Clerk has been speaking to Devon Wildlife Trust. It might be possible to get free advice and possibly a grant for creating a pond.*

2.4. Ted will plant more willow whips in Webber's Meadow where the river bank's caving in and near the flooded depression. Ted said the beavers seem to be eating the willow!

### 3. Parklife/DCC trees

A date for diaries - 10am on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January - meeting in the new cemetery to help Parklife weed the hedging.

Gill put a post on the village Facebook page again although this usually only results in the same, single, volunteer each time.

The Rowans on the bank behind the MUGA seem to be holding up despite the winter winds but hopefully Parklife will be able to re-stake them on 26<sup>th</sup> January.

### 4. School Trees

Steve is liaising with the school to get a date for planting 6 new tree whips.

Gill's got the whips and has bought 12 stakes and 15 guards for the new trees and to rescue some existing whips. The guards are very robust and tie firmly to the stakes so they shouldn't be flattened by schoolchildren or lawnmowers again.

### 5. Val's Memorial Tree

Three memorial trees will now be planted as memorials to Val, one in each village:

- a. On 16<sup>th</sup> January Ted and Gill planted a Prunus 'Jacqueline' in Harpford Churchyard, bought using donations from GoFundMe. (We also took cut branches from a dead Horse Chestnut and piled them in heaps to create hedgehog habitats).
- b. Howard Hughes has donated 3 Whitebeams which VOSRA will plant in Venn Ottery green. Two of these will replace trees damaged in the recent mini-tornado and the third will be planted as a memorial to Val;
- c. On 10<sup>th</sup> January Ted and Gill planted a (disease resistant) Elm tree in Webber's Meadow, donated by Anita Kemp;
- d. Ted has ordered three plaques to place alongside the memorial trees once he's mounted them on wooden stakes.

Ted and Gill will submit invoices to the Parish Council who are holding the £135 raised by GoFundMe. Gill will then update the people who donated the money and put a spreadsheet on the Parish Council website showing how the donations were raised and spent.

### 6. Venn Ottery Green

As the Parish Council now have a policy to replace dead trees the Parish Clerk has got a 'Landmark Tree' from Devon Wildlife Trust to replace an uprooted tree in Venn Ottery Green. It's a small leafed lime which the CCG suggest commemorates the building of the new bridge.

### 7. St Luke's Churchyard Bio-Diversity

7.1. On 6<sup>th</sup> December Rosemary and Gill met in St Luke's churchyard to:

- plant £100 worth of crocus's, anemones and early, small, daffodils;
- plant 20 pots of snowdrops;
- and weeded all round the trees and added to the mulch.

We could plant some hellebores in the south west corner of St Lukes churchyard in March/April and some cyclamens.

7.2 Chris plans to go into the churchyard soon to:

- strim the area which will only be strimmed once a year;
- plant a honeysuckle in the wild area around an old stump;
- plant a gorse bush in the northern corner.

7.3 We met David Curry from the Diocese of Exeter when he won an award for his work with 'Devon Green Churches'. He offered to survey our four parish churchyards and draw up a list of things which *could* be done to improve bio-diversity. Harpford Churchyard is happy for him to visit there, now need to ask Venn Ottery.

7.4. The bats will be going in hibernation so Gill will leave it to later in 2024 to ask Devon Wildlife to lend us a microphone & sensor (FoC) to see if there are bats in the old hidden shed.

## 8. Trees on EDDC land

EDDC say we definitely can't plant the Rowan Olympic Flame on Millmoor Vale as there's too many services under the ground (very disappointing!)

Gill to chase up EDDC to see if they completed their survey and find out where we can plant some trees elsewhere on their land.

9. Ted has put up a bird box in Venn Ottery churchyard.

## 10. Left Over AONB Freebies

We still have 1 x standard beech tree. Gill has asked EDDC if we can put this on Chestnut Green to eventually take over from the Ash trees.

Gill still has 20 hedgehog fence markers looking for good homes.

## 11. Grounds Maintenance

Gill to ask Jacqui which of the CCG suggestions for the grounds maintenance contract actually went into the contract?

## 12. Grass Banks

### 12.1. Green Bank

Gill to ask Jacqui for the new grounds maintenance contractor contact details so we can work with them to plant shrubs on Green Bank.

The shrub suggestions put forward were:

- Heather bush (Exeter)
- Photina (dwarf)
- Pittsoporum (dwarf)

- Skimmia
- Sarcocca
- Viburnum (smaller)
- Osmanthus

Some of these shrubs could grow into trees (e.g. pittsoporum) so we need to be careful to buy dwarf varieties.

12.2. Gill to ask Jacqui Baldwin who owns the higher School Lane grass bank so we can consider whether to plant wildflowers or trees there.

### 13. Other Projects

13.1. AONB – Ted says the East Devon AONB has been renamed to “East Devon National Landscape” and all the current staff are retiring or leaving this spring. Time will tell what impact the changes will bring.

13.2 Clinton Devon Estates got a grant for their Nature Restoration Project which will reach as far as the A3052. Hopefully we’ll get involved when they start communicating with communities.

13.3. Ted still hasn’t heard back from the Electricity people about planting trees or shrubs to hide the generator station so he’ll chase that up.

13.4. Saving Devon’s Treescapes will give communities all the stuff needed to create a Micro Nursery to grow up to 200 trees from seed. Steve thought the school may be interested but Gill has yet to ask for more details.

### 14. Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Weds 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 7pm on in the Cannon Inn.