

Climate Change Working Group
7pm on Monday 14th March 2023 – The Cannon Inn

Present: Gill Cameron Webb, Ted Swan, Geraldine Swan, Rosemary Walker, Chris Lea and Maz Dufall.

Apologies: Steve Filer, Howard Hughes and Brian Carpenter.

MINUTES

1. Unfortunately Brian Carpenter has had to step back from coming to group meetings due to work commitments but would like involvement in future events.

2. Webber's Meadow

2.1 AONB Project

The AONB increased our claim from £487 to £533 to cover VAT items and £38 for the Rootgrow. As this wasn't actually used they allowed us to buy some Afterplant for £7 instead (which has now been put around the apple trees) and said the Parish Council can keep the £31 difference in reserve in case any trees fail.

Thank you to Simon Tutty (AONB) and Howard for their photos which were included in Sidmouth Herald and Parish Magazine articles.

2.2 MUGA Soil and Flooding

The MUGA soil was left in place in case removal caused the orchard to be flooded.

Ted sent the Parish Council photos of blocks of concrete in the MUGA soil which should be removed to avoid damage to grass mowers.

The Parish Clerk will go back to the MUGA contractors to ask how both issues can be resolved.

The Jubilee Copse 'appears' to have survived the flooding so has been tidied up and new canes and guards put in where needed. Only time will tell!

2.3 Hedge Line Ted has put in approx. 200 willows along the hedge line between Farmer Snell's land and Webber's Meadow to help to drain and dry the land.

2.4 Watering Webber's Meadow Trees

Despite having a high water table Webber's Meadow still dried out during last year's hot, dry summer. The copse had to be watered by hand which was really hard work and adding the orchard and poplars will make watering even harder so solutions were suggested for decision at the next meeting:

a) Mulching to reduce evaporation:

- Gill asked three companies to quote for 2 cubic meters of well-rotted woodchip. The cheapest was £80 incl. delivery from Sid Valley Trees and Landscaping;
- Ted & Geraldine will investigate getting 'digestate' which might be free;
- Maz will ask Alan Carter who might be able to provide mulch from his farm;
- if there's any grass gathered after cutting we could use that for mulch;

b) we could ask Keith Rennells (Parklife) about using his water bowser;

c) we could organise a watering team if needed;

d) we could do nothing and just hope for a wet summer.

3. DCC Emergency Tree Fund

3.1 Review of Planting

The Emergency Tree planting was a huge success as dry weather and the ideal number of volunteers meant all the planting sessions went ahead as planned. Now we just have to wait for spring to see how all the new trees and hedging will transform the four locations.

a) Sportsfield on 27th Jan

- 26 trees and 750+ hedging whips;
- a massive planting team of 26 CCG and community volunteers, plus 3 from Parklife, Bicton also sent 9 students and the school sent 20+ children.

b) New Cemetery on 1st and 15th Feb

- 260 hedging whips and six trees;
- 10 CCG and community volunteers plus 3 from Parklife and 10 RSPB volunteers made up the planting team.

c) Old Cemetery on 4th Feb

- 10 trees were planted;
- 12 CCG and community volunteers plus Keith from Parklife turned up for this session;
- once the DCC trees were planted it became clear there was a big gap so a small leafed lime donated by the AONB was also planted.

d) Burrow Green on 15th Feb

- eight volunteers from the CCG and community planted four trees.

e) Allotment on 1st and 15th Feb – An added extra!

- allotment holders have been clearing rubbish from the Devon Bank but this left bare patches;
- no planting was planned here but DCC gave us an additional 150 whips which Parklife and 8 volunteers planted to fill some gaps;
- more whips may be required as more hedging is cleared.

All the volunteers were very grateful to Anita, Lorna and Makala for the free, delicious, refreshments on all four planting days.

This scale of planting was only achieved with the help and support of many people and organisations. Thanks go to Devon County Council for choosing our Parish for this year's ETF project, to Parklife for organising it all, to the Parish Council for making parish land available for planting, to the RSPB volunteers, Bicton students, the schoolchildren and all the community volunteers who braved the winter weather to help with the planting.

3.2 Maintenance

Keith Rennells (Parklife) is coming back in April to monitor the planting and to discuss on-going maintenance (e.g. watering). When Keith proposes a date Gill will send it to the CCG members.

Parklife have already said 1m of grass needs to be left uncut around each tree and 1/2m along the hedges, and the Parish Clerk has agreed this with ARCCAS.

The group discussed whether other areas of grass could be left uncut.

No other change was proposed for the sportsfield, the new cemetery south field is already left uncut and Burrow Green is not cut very often. However it might be worth reviewing grass cutting in the older part of the old cemetery and Gill will send some review dates in April, to meet in the old cemetery in time to report to April's parish council. Options could include leaving grass long along the west and south walls and allowing the eastern hedge to grow wider.

5. Memorial Trees

5.1 Instead of planting a memorial tree to Jean Salter in the old cemetery Joy Bagwell gave Ted & Geraldine £25 to plant bulbs in the new cemetery, which we'll discuss in the autumn. In the meantime free snowdrops could be planted against the hedges.

A crabapple tree provided by the AONB was planted in the vacant space in the cemetery instead of Jean Salter's tree.

5.2. Ted spoke to Mark Ward about planting a memorial tree to Val Ranger in Harpford cemetery but later found a memorial to Val has been put next to the existing crabapple near the village hall. We'll wait and see what Mark Ward says about planting a tree in the cemetery.

5.3 Gill to find out if someone from Harpford could water their jubilee tree and Elaine Evans' memorial tree.

6. Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) Free Tree Give-Away (Saturday 11th February)

The free tree give-away was really successful with 250 native whips being given to 60+ people/groups.

The group would like to do it again next year and learning from this year's session we'll make some changes; we'll start setting up much earlier to give more time to set up; we'll make sure we have DWT cards ready to give to people who want a hedgeful of whips and instead of rationing the trees to 2 each we'll give people up to 5 whips each.

7. Left Over Freebies!

Lindi Rich (East Devon AONB) also gave away lots of goodies on 11th Feb. The bird boxes went quickly but homes need to be found for other left over stuff:

1 x standard beech tree – Gill to ask the Parish Clerk to ask East Devon if we can put this on Chestnut Green to eventually replace the Ash trees;

1 x standard alder tree – Gill to ask Parish Council if this can go near the poplars in the south field of Webber's Meadow;

1 x hedgehog box – Gill to ask the Parish Council if we can put this in the old cemetery as there are no children or dogs to disturb hedgehogs;

2 x house martin boxes – Gill to offer them to Toby Taylor (RSPB);

2 x bags of flowering meadow seeds – Ted will put these in Webber's Meadow.

There are also some whips to find places for:

30 x whips potted up last year by Venn Ottery – These could go in Badger Close green once the Parish Clerk finds out who owns the land, or possibly in the old cemetery;

100+ new whips offered by Howard – these can go to the allotment to grow on and put in their Devon hedge;

20 Hazel whips from Geraldine – these could be used to fill gaps in hedges, e.g. in the allotments or the sportsfield.

8. Hedgehog Highway 'Holes'

The Hedgehog Highway Project is offering parishes 50 hedgehog highway 'holes', made from recycled plastic, for £150.

The CCG group don't recommend buying these as 25 of these 'holes' were given away on 11th Feb by the AONB and we still have 25 leftover to find homes for.

Gill will ask if the RSPB or scouts would like them. E.g. to give away on a Funday Stall if they're doing one.

9. Parish Weedkiller Strategy

The Parish Council decided to stop using weed killer in the parish, unless specifically authorised by them for certain locations. E.g. on the paved area at Glebelands, around the Surgery building and pathway and at the entrance to the Venn Ottery Road Cemetery.

The meeting agreed that whilst this isn't a total ban it's a big step in the right direction.

10. Next Year's Projects

At the next meeting we'll discuss what projects we can do next year, e.g.:

- create a dog proof wildlife scrub area in Webber's meadow south;
- enhance the concrete area at the top of Glebelands;
- Wildlife cameras for educational purposes;
- find out what projects could attract grants (e.g. Wild about Devon is giving £500 and Ted has details of an AONB grant).

11. Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Tuesday 18th April 2023 at 7pm on in the Cannon Inn.