

Twyford Parish Council & Twyford Together

Minutes of a meeting of the Twyford in Bloom Working Group held at Loddon Hall, Twyford on Thursday 20th June 2024 at 7.45pm.

Present: Bridget Ditcham (Twyford Parish Council), Malcolm Bray (Twyford Parish Council), Stephen Loyd (Environmentalist & Volunteer), Diana Loyd (Hedgehog Initiative), Graham Starkie (TRHA & Twyford History Society), Gerry Wise (Adopt a Street & Twyford History Society), Gavin Robinson (Gardening Volunteer & Loddon Hall Liaison), Stephen Billington (Gardening Volunteer), Rebecca Howard (Polehampton School Secret Garden & Stanlake Trees) & Ian Butterick (Stanlake Meadow Copse).

Minutes: Mrs Lynn Povey (Deputy Clerk, Twyford Parish Council).

1. **Welcome.** Mrs B Ditcham welcomed everyone.
2. **Apologies.** Gemma Alford (Wildflowers) Jackie Jagger (Twyford Parish Council), Hazel Evans (Twyford Twinning Association), Emma Donald (Wildflowers/Labyrinth & Twyford Together), Paul Cassidy (Twyford Together) & April Magrath (Resident – Biodiversity Interests).
3. **Twyford in Bloom 2024:**
 - 3.1 Preparations – Update. Mrs B Ditcham reported that preparations continue and highlighted the revised route (see item 3.3).
 - 3.2 Portfolios - Updates. Mrs B Ditcham thanked those who had sent their portfolios (annual reports) in. Any further reports to be sent to the Deputy Clerk by the 24th June.
 - 3.3 Route – Update. The revised route is as follows:
 - **Meet at Stanlake (Presentation in the Pavilion)**
 - By car – Stanlake Lane, New Road, Northbury Avenue, London Road, Loddon Hall Road to:
 - **KGVR**
 - By foot – Across Loddon Hall Car Park to:
 - **TRHA**
 - By car along the London Road to:
 - **Jubilee Corner/Almshouses**
 - By car – London Road, Church Street, Waltham Road, Hurst Road to:
 - **Hurst Road Allotments**
 - By car – Hurst Road, Waltham Road to:
 - **Stanlake Meadows**
 - By foot to:
 - **Stanlake Pavilion (Refreshments and debrief)**
 - 3.4 Thames & Chilterns in Bloom – Judge’s Visit – To note Twyford’s visit will take place on the 9th July 2024. Noted.
 - 3.5 The Tour – To note Mrs B Ditcham & Mrs J Jagger to conduct the tour with further participants to be invited along the route. Deputy Clerk to send out invitations.
 - 3.6 Wheelbarrow Displays – Update. The Deputy Clerk reported that the number of confirmed wheelbarrow displays have increased. Further promotion to be made.
4. **Hanging Baskets** – To note that the summer baskets have been installed. Noted.
5. **Update on ongoing projects:**
 - Adopt-a-Street (GW). Mr G Wise reported:
 - Members of the Adopt-A-Street team are continuing with their rounds.
 - Members will be looking to support the ‘In Bloom’ efforts.
 - Air Quality (BD). No report.
 - Bridge Copse (SL). Mr S Loyd provided the following written report:
 - Two work sessions are planned over the summer to remove some holly and create more log piles.
 - Cuincy Garden (BD/HE). Mrs H Evans provided the following written report:
 - The garden has been weeded and planted with geraniums for the summer. We are looking to get a better sign to say ‘Cuincy Garden’ as the small one is now obscured by plants which have matured. The eucalyptus which is

growing by the history Society sign will get very tall and possibly become a problem.

- Garden Areas (GR). Mr G Robinson provided the following written reports:
 - Bell Corner
 - This is establishing now, although still a few gaps which I will try to fill. Will need watering.
 - Cemetery Garden
 - The weeding we did earlier in the year is allowing the existing plants to strengthen. The hedging also seems to have taken. I think we could divide the geraniums and Sedum in the Autumn to try to reduce the amount of bare soil. If there are roses available from the Library we could try some here. The sack containing three corded leek bulbs that we dug up, is still there and needs to be dealt with.
 - Jubilee Corner
 - Looks OK, although nothing special as there is not a lot in flower. Due to the loss of shrubs, there are gaps where we could put in roses if they were available. I think that would be a big improvement. Possibility of putting in a Cotinus plant in the Autumn which I have going spare. It is a very well used area, nearly always someone on the bench when I visit.
 - Polehampton Corner
 - Everything we have planted is establishing, although **one hedging plant** didn't take and needs replacing. Recent excavations on the pavement impacted on the bed, but it is recovering. The bench has been painted by the Parish Council and looks very nice.
 - Millennium Garden
 - The plants we put in last year are getting established, so the area is looking tidy and cared for. It would be good to have a **few highlight plants** to provide a bit of additional interest at certain times of the year.
 - Stanlake Tub
 - Looking good. I cut back the nettles and brambles.
- Gateways (BD/JJ)
 - Daffodils – Native daffodils needed. Carried forward for Mrs J Jagger to report costings at the next meeting.
- Hurst Road Allotments
 - Twyford Growers (CH-N). Ms C Hughes Nind provided the following written report:
 - We sowed seed in our wheelbarrow at the front of our plot and it is all growing nicely. With some warmth, we hope it will be in flower for 9 July. Plants in the barrow are: lunaria (toadflax), dahlias (Bishop's Children), Chrysanthemum carinatum, and a pale-yellow marigold. We are generally 4/5 people meeting once a week, and we manage the plot in a way to encourage insects in any event: we don't use pesticides or herbicides and we allow some plants to grow simply because they attract bees (such as alkanet).
 - Communal Area (MB) – Mr M Bray provided the following written report:
 - The community area has been used by plot holders over the last year including a horticultural talk. The Twyford Allotments Tenants Association has held its committee meetings here and its annual barbecue. Due to the sloping ground of the allotment torrential rain earlier in the year caused flooding of the earth closet in the community area and its temporary closure. To mitigate this problem the earth closet will be moved to the other side of the plot and the adjacent structure will be moved to accommodate this change in layout. This work will be carried out shortly.
 - French Drain (redirection of natural spring) (MB) – Mr M Bray provided the following written report:
 - The torrential rain experienced earlier in the year led to a natural stream finding a new path resulting in an outflow from the earth bank

- onto the car park and flooding in a number of plots adjacent to Gas Lane with a consequential reduction in cultivation on those plots. Wokingham Borough Council have agreed to excavate a French across the car park adjacent to the earth embankment and pipe it downhill to discharge into the brook. This work is expected to take place in the near future.
- Wildflower Area (RL – TATA). Ms A Magrath provided the following written report:
 - Keeping on top of the grass coming through, although have left some area of flax grass in place as is currently being used by a common toad as shelter. Could do with a new sign/ poster explaining what the area is being used for as current sign is a bit weathered.
 - Hazel Copse (SL) – No Report.
 - KGVR (BD/MB/ED/JJ)
 - Grass Labyrinth. Mrs B Ditcham reported that regular mowing continues.
 - Seasonal Bulbs (ED/JJ) – Approval of bulbs gained in March's Parish Lands Meeting. Carried forward for Mrs J Jagger to report costings at the next meeting.
 - Mrs E Donald via email raised her concerns regarding the bulbs and feels a border fence similar to that surrounding the wildflower area at Stanlake is needed to protect them.
 - Mr M Bray confirmed that fencing to surround the Labyrinth was previously discussed within a Parish Lands meeting – The Committee agreed no action.
 - Hedge Laying – Preparations continue for works to commence in 2025. No report.
 - Pillar renovations – Wargrave Road entrance. No report.
 - Loddon Hall (GR) – No report.
 - Millennium Copse (SL). Mr S Loyd provided the following written report:
 - There is a breeding population of slow worms in the area.
 - Polehampton Charities – No report.
 - Polehampton School – Secret Garden (RH). Mrs R Howard provided the following written report:
 - The secret garden has gone from strength to strength over the early Summer / Spring. I have had the pleasure of teaching 36 children each week in groups of 8. These children spend between 6-12 weeks working in the garden with me before the groups are changed over.

The children learn how to sow and care for seedlings. Potting up plants and building habitats for wildlife with the aim of fostering a love of the natural environment at the same time as enhancing their own mental well-being.

This year we have made our own Stag beetle habitat using coppiced hazel trunks buried in the ground. We have sown a wildflower area from seed, removing first the turf and marking out a pathway to enable the children to be able to walk through the space and get closer to the nature it attracts.

The children have been eager to harvest and try their produce. So far we have tried strawberries, raspberries, salad onions and radishes. We hope that our other crops do just as well although we have had to fight off the slugs and snails this year! I have made non- alcoholic beer traps with the kids (which by the way seem to work just as well) and used brambles to lay in between crops to naturally protect our plants. We have also seen signs that a hedgehog is visiting the garden so many of the slug issues are only minor.

The pond we made last year from an old hot water tank is bedding in very well now and is part of our wildlife area which is surrounded by wildflowers the children have planted themselves.

They are all excited each week to see the changes in the garden and look for new produce! Fingers crossed we will get some more edibles before the season is over.

- Pond Mapping / Hedgehog Sightings (GR/DL)
 - Email address (hedgehogsg10@gmail.com) created by Mr G Robinson. Mr G Robinson/Mrs D Loyd to manage, monitor and act accordingly.
 - Hedgehog article received from Mrs D Loyd – Uploaded to the TPC News page.
 - Hedgehog project was promoted at the Donkey Derby 16.06.24. Mrs Diana Loyd provided the following written report:
 - The stall was very successful. Members of the public were invited to note on our map of Twyford any recent sightings of hedgehogs in their road. 45 sightings were noted, though this of course does not necessarily mean 45 different hedgehogs. The sightings will be submitted to Gavin Robinson for his overall Twyford map.
 - A total of £42 was raised for a local Hedgehog Rescue Service. The falling numbers of hedgehogs nationally was discussed and people who showed interest were encouraged to make their gardens hedgehog friendly.
 - We hope that more sightings will be reported to the designated email address once the RG10 article is published next month.
- Rewilding/Wildflower & Bee Friendly areas
 - Verey Close/Broad Hinton Copse (SL). Mr S Loyd provided the following written report:
 - I have recruited a volunteer family to start this project.
 - Site meeting held Monday 17th to discuss plans.
 - WBC have given permission in principle to a volunteer group taking on the management of the copse.
 - I have to tie up a few points on insurance/risk/objectives etc but all being well work could commence this autumn.
 - Bridge House (GA/GR). Mr G Robinson has produced a planting plan for the area along with associated costs. Deputy Clerk to liaise with Bridge House.
 - Loddon Hall/KGVR Wildflower Area (GA) – No report.
 - Ruscombe Turn – Managed by WBC. No report.
 - Malvern Way – Managed by WBC. No report.
- Stanlake Copse (IB). Mr I Butterick provided the following written report:
 - The living willow hedge has established itself and is growing well, as is the hawthorn we have laid this year by the entrance to the copse by the yellow gate.
 - The flag iris and gypsywort have grown well in the seasonal pond this year.
 - The path around and through the copse have had bark chippings spread along their length to improve access and cover the most muddy parts of the paths.
 - We continue to cut back the brambles and nettles along the edge of the path and around the patches of ferns within the copse to make them more on show.
- Stanlake Meadow Trees (RH) – Mrs R Howard provided the following written report:
 - This year we have increased the areas of Stanlake left to nature, widening the long grass borders around newly planted trees to allow them to start to work in harmony with the natural landscape. Research now shows that planted trees are far more likely to thrive if planted in communities with others of their own species. We are also encouraging new wildlife to Stanlake by planting more wildflowers such as teasles and Ox eye daisies. One of these areas has been protected using coppiced hazel from the Hurst Road allotment to shield growing trees and flowers and prevent trampling. (Please see photo attached) This natural 'fence' is already bedding in nicely, with many of its uprights starting to grow and form new hazel saplings. This area was once completely barren (only two years ago) and suffered tremendously from soil compaction, so seeing these trees not only surviving but thriving is a real win.

We have of course suffered some losses regarding trees. The very wet weather has caused 2 trees to remain waterlogged for much of the winter / spring which has in turn caused the roots to rot. This is unavoidable but perhaps we can replace these with water loving trees such as alder this Winter?

I have had several working party sessions at Stanlake this year, one resulting in the the hand-made hazel fence and many of the group keep an eye on Stanlake and report back to me when things need working on. (see photo of working group).

I hope that Stanlake will go from strength to strength in the coming years as our trees planted in 2020, 2021 and 2023 mature. I have already witnessed more wildlife using the field, from the not so common Thrush to ladybirds, Stag beetles and butterflies a plenty. It would be good to do an audit of these in late summer to see what we can do to enhance the area further and provide more possible habitats for our species in crisis.

Action

Mr M Bray & Mrs R Howard to liaise over suggested actions following a tree survey carried out by Mr M Bray and Mrs B Ditcham. Deputy Clerk to circulate the report upon receipt.

The below actions previously set are to be carried forward:

- *Mr S Loyd suggested the use of a carbon capture area calculator – To be investigated.*
- *General comment – Lots of litter on the railway land. Deputy Clerk to investigate getting this cleared.*
 - Twyford Station – planters (PC) – These have been refilled and are being maintained.
 - Twyford Together (RY/ED/PC) – No report.
 - TRHA (GS/MB).
 - The store continues to do well.
 - The TRHA Summer Show was a great success.
 - Stall at the Donkey Derby went well.

6. New projects for 2024/25:

- Sponsorship of garden areas and planter. Carried forward.
- Wildflower Information Board (Parish Land Project) – To note that the board has been installed in KGVR. Noted.
- Labyrinth Information Board (JJ). Carried forward.
- Shop windows – To consider inviting local artists to display suitable paintings along the route. Mrs H Evans to ask the Charvil Arts Group to see if they are able to support. No report received therefore it was decided not to proceed.
- Utility Boxes – To consider getting a local artist to paint the boxes to deter from being graffitied. It was decided not to proceed but to continue to request/arrange for graffiti to be cleaned off of structures.

Mr M Bray gave an overview of the redevelopment plans for the skate park, the crowd funding and outlined discussions from the consultation meeting between Maverick and the users that took place 19th June 2024.

7. Future of 'In Bloom'. Mrs B Ditcham confirmed that the suggestion of having a break from partaking in the Thames & Chilterns in Bloom event but continuing with our own 'Twyford in Bloom' works and initiatives discussed at the May 'Twyford in Bloom' Working Group Meeting would be put to the Full Council when they next meet.

8. Date of next meeting – 24th October 2024.