

## Appendix 8

### Greening Ettington

Agenda request: Biodiversity

We write to ask the parish council to request inclusion of discussion at its next meeting under the heading of biodiversity, with a view to making a decision on the following preliminary proposals.

We are a small group of villagers who have begun discussing ideas for enhancing the environment in Ettington, with an emphasis on biodiversity in particular. We hope to bring forward more detailed proposals in time to commence a programme of positive action in the autumn, the ideal time for planting and sowing. We would be pleased to hear from interested members of the community, especially anyone with expertise – perhaps via the parish clerk.

In the meantime, we ask the parish council to consider some simple measures that will save money, enhance biodiversity, reduce carbon emissions and cost nothing:

#### **Proposal 1**

**After an initial mowing, leave some areas of grass in Ettington unmown until July or August 2021, when the main wildflower season will be over. We propose this for one or more small areas of the recreation ground, but it may also be appropriate for other areas where the parish council takes responsibility for mowing, for instance, outside Ryepiece Barn in Rogers Lane.**

#### **Proposal 2**

**We also ask the parish council to suggest to the managers/owners of Ettington Chase that they take the same no-mow approach to the whole of the former parkland on the village side of the car parking bund. Last year, this area was left unmown in early summer; the sprays of wild flowers that appeared were the inspiration for our group being formed.**

Selective non-mowing is recommended by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It says: “Mowing your lawn less, and letting parts of it grow long, saves you time and helps give nature a home. Create a mini jungle through which beetles and other small creatures can wander and where sparrows and goldfinches may come to feed on the seeds. The grasses will set seed, wildflowers already in your lawn will grab their opportunity to bloom, and the longer stems will create a sheltered microclimate.”

The advice is here: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/give-nature-a-home-in-your-garden/garden-activities/giveyourmowerarest/>

The reason for suggesting this – apart from the immediate benefits for wildlife – is to test public reaction, with a view to a more concerted effort to create wildflower areas by sowing mixtures of indigenous wild flowers in autumn 2021.

Bristol City Council noted in January 2020 that sowing three grass-free wildflower areas at Clifton Down would cost less than regular maintenance, after the initial costs had been met.

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s56058/Wildflower%20beds%20on%20Christchurch%20Green.pdf>

Selective non-mowing in 2021 should really be seen as a no-risk strategy, if it becomes clear that no-mow areas are unpopular or scruffy, then they could be mown at any this year. Planting of mixed wild flower seed this autumn would provide a much more attractive spectacle. Those of you who have seen similar projects can surely testify that this will enhance the appearance of targeted areas, in addition to enhancing biodiversity and encouraging the bird species we are losing.

As it is, there are parts of the recreation ground, in particular, that are currently of little use and add little to the visual amenity of the space.

Grass could be kept long at any point along the edges of the recreation ground, except close to parking spaces. In particular, we suggest experimenting with longer grass under the three trees in the north-east corner of the site, or around the small group of trees near the children's play area. It would be important to mow a clearly-defined edge to the longer grass patches, as recommended in the RSPB guidance. Also to increase enjoyment, it would be good to mow paths through such patches.

There would need to be some effort to explain the no-mow experiment to the community.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss other ideas with the council later in the year. As individuals, we are wary of taking on time-consuming projects. But future possibilities include:

- Pond creation and restoration – the best thing we can do for wildlife
- Establishing increased biodiversity by sowing indigenous wildflower seed mixes
- Creation of a community orchard, in addition to Ryepiece Orchard

- Planting of blossom-bearing trees to complement the existing ones in Rogers Lane and elsewhere
- Community workshops in, say, making a “bug hotel”, bird nesting boxes, or a shelter for hedgehogs
- Raising awareness of assets such as the orchids and butterflies at the by-pass.

This would be in addition to initiatives already in hand, including litter picking by Ettington Rubbish Friends, and the current survey of public rights of way in the parish.

We would be interested to know what proposals are being made for managing the community orchards on the Ryepiece Orchard development.

Yours, John Walsh, John Wade, Simon Pipe, Beth Nicholson and Tomos George, Ettington.