

# REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP

## NATURE ACTION PLAN UPDATE

**Report Reference** EN-21-01  
**Meeting Date** 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021  
**Agenda Item** 5  
**Prepared by** Planning and Facilities Officer

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### 1.0 OVERVIEW UPDATE

The Nature Action Plan was adopted by the committee in March 2020 and the committee receives a standing update on progress against the plan.

Since the previous committee meeting the Bug Hotel for Higher Town Green has been installed. As part of the tree planting plan, the 13 various areas across Knutsford with permission to plant and a large proportion of the Longridge area have had trees planted by the Town Ranger. These will be regularly watered for the next few weeks. Cheshire Wildlife Trust have completed a small allocation of whip planting on Ashworth Park as part of the planting plan.

To date 23 of the 29 actions on the action plan have been completed (including ongoing actions).

The six overdue outstanding actions are:

- Launch of the Tree Planting Mission (6)
- Annual bulb planting event (14)
- Information to be published on website promoting hedges and hedgehog holes (15)
- Engagement with landowners to connect green corridors (19)
- Creation of wildlife corridor between Bluebell Wood and Knutsford Heath (20)
- Engagement with landowners to develop Booths Mere to St John's Wood wildlife corridor (22)

An update on each is provided in the table overleaf.

### 2.0 QUEEN'S GREEN CANOPY

In May 2021, it was announced that an initiative to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 would be to encourage the planting of trees across the country. This will be given proper consideration in due course and proposals for either additional tree planting or special tree planting will be developed.

### 3.0 SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS TO PLAN

The Nature Action Plan working group have agreed three suggested amendments to the plan.

#### 3.1 PAUSING OF WHIP PLANT PLANS NEAR ST JOHN'S WOOD / ST HELENA'S

The chair of the newly formed Friends of St John's Wood has requested that the planned whip planting to fill the space between St John's Wood and the site of St Helena is paused until the Friends have

developed a masterplan for the management of the area. This was planned for autumn 2021, but the Nature Action Plan working group agreed it should be paused until the overall plan for St John's Wood is created.

### **3.2 PAUSING OF WHIP PLANT PLANS NEAR ST JOHN'S WOOD / ST HELENA'S**

It is suggested that a nature themed event be organised to encourage the public to undertake planting and wildlife projects in their gardens. It is envisaged to be a green community fair where:

- the council can promote its work under the Nature Action Plan
- organisations such as Cheshire Wildlife Trust can provide advice
- local businesses could sell relevant goods e.g. bird tables and trees

The event would take place in the autumn ready for the tree planting season. It would be funded through the council's Open Spaces/ Nature Projects budget line.

### **3.3 KNUTSFORD 'BIG BULB PLANT'**

The plan currently envisages annual bulb planted events led by the Town Council to plant bulbs on open spaces and verges across the Town. The Nature Action Plan working group aspires to plant bulbs on the majority of open spaces and verges.

It is suggested that this is changed to be a larger community led initiative whereby residents can apply to the Town Council to run their own bulb planting event. This would enable the council to oversee a larger programme than organising its own events and encourages wider community ownership of the planting initiative.

Individuals (or groups) would apply to the Town Council to run a local bulb planting event for a specific area. The council would provide a selection of suitable bulbs, advice on how to plant them and some leaflets to distribute to neighbours to promote a bulb planting event. The events would also be featured on the council website.

The planting events would be run over the course of a fortnight/month and promoted across the town. The Town Council would organise its own bulb planting events to cover areas residents have not come forward to cover – these would be led by the Town Ranger or ward members.

## **4.0 DIRECTION REQUIRED**

Members are asked give direction to the Town Clerk in relation the items above.

Ref	Action	Task	Responsible	Target	Status	Notes
1	One	Potential tree planting locations identified tree planting proposal prepared for committee.	WG/PFO	Sep-20	Complete	
2	One	Committee to agree tree planting plan	Committee	Sep-20	Complete	
3	Two	Town Clerk to write Cheshire East Council urging permission be given for tree planting on suitable highway verges	TC	Mar-20	Complete	CEC has stated it is undertaking a review which will be concluded towards the end of 2020. The Town Clerk received an update from the Portfolio Holder in February 2021 that the policy is still in development and that they hope to share it in the coming months.
4	Two	Subject to agreement from Cheshire East Council, verges to be included in the tree planting plan	PFO/ Committee	Sep-20	Complete	Verges included, pending permission.
5	Three	Tree Mission page set up on Town Council website	PFO	May-20	Complete	Will be incorporated on new website to be launched in September.
6	Three	Launch of the tree mission	PFO	May-20	Outstanding	Tree Mission will be launched with the publicity from the recent planting and publicity surrounding a planting event.
7	Three	Planning logs to be monitored and letters sent to applicants regarding replanting of trees	PFO/ASO	Ongoing	Complete	System now in place.
8	Four	Tree tracker to be included on mission page	PFO	May-20	Complete	Will be incorporated on new website to be launched as part of the tree mission.
9	Five	Review of planting areas to be undertaken and planting schemes to be prepared to comply with the policy	PFO	Apr-20	Complete	
10	Six	Cheshire Wildlife Trust to be commissioned to create meadow annually from 2021	PFO	2021	Complete	CWT commissioned to provide meadow.
11	Seven	Potential verges for planting schemes identified and proposals prepared for committee	WG/PFO	Sep-20	Complete	

12	Seven	Committee to agree verges improvement plan	Committee	Sep-20	Complete	
13	Eight	Bulb planting areas to be identified	WG/PFO	Sep-20	Complete	
14	Eight	Annual bulb planting events to be organised	PFO	Oct-20	Outstanding	Bulb planting was not organised for 2020 due to COVID restrictions. Bulb planting events and initiatives will be planned for Autumn 2021.
15	Nine	Information to be published on council website promoting hedges and hedgehog holes	PFO	May-20	Outstanding	This section of the website will be added with a number of updates during June.
16	Nine	Hedgehog highway campaign to encourage creation of hedgehog holes	PFO	Nov-21	Outstanding	Preliminary work completed for a launch in the autumn.
17	Ten	Open spaces where hedges could replace or complement fences identified and planting plan prepared	WG/PFO	Sep-20	Complete	
18	Ten	Committee to agree hedge planting plan	Committee	Sep-20	Complete	
19	Eleven	Target landowners identified to encourage planting of trees and hedges to connect green corridors	WG/PFO	Sep-20	Outstanding	Nature Action Plan working group has identified the areas; engagement will take place later this year.
20	Twelve	Project established with landowners to create wildlife corridor from Bluebell Wood to the Heath	WG/PFO	Jun-20	Outstanding	Engagement will take place later this year.
21	Twelve	Planting undertaken on open space on Longridge to extend wildlife corridor from St Johns Wood	PFO	Mar-20	Complete	
22	Twelve	Engagement with Cheshire East Council and Developer to link Booths Mere to wildlife corridor from St Johns Wood	WG/PFO	Jun-20	Outstanding	Awaiting the submission of the planning application to enable a suitable route to be identified.
23	Thirteen	Identification of suitable ponds for planting schemes	WG/PFO	Sep-20	Complete	Pond information to encourage pond creation to be added to website.
24	Fourteen	Bird / bat boxes to be installed in Wallwood	Committee	Mar-20	Complete	Boxes installed.
25	Fourteen	Bird / bat boxes to be installed on Higher Town Green	Committee	Mar-20	Complete	Boxes installed.

26	Fourteen	Bird / bat boxes to be installed near Obelisk	Committee	Mar-20	Complete	Boxes installed.
27	Fourteen	Bird / bat boxes to be installed in Cemetery	Committee	Mar-20	Complete	Boxes installed.
28	Fourteen	Bug hotels to be installed in Wallwood and Higher Town Green	Committee	Aug-20	Complete	Both installed.
29	Fifteen	Project established to undertake tree mapping across Knutsford	WG/PFO	Aug-20	Ongoing	Tree mapping to resume early June.