

REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
NATURE ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Report Reference EN-21-18
Meeting Date 15th November 2021
Agenda Item 7
Prepared by Planning and Facilities Officer



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. To date 24 of the 29 actions on the action plan have been completed (including ongoing actions).

The five outstanding actions are:

- Launch of the Tree Planting Mission (6)
- 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 TREE PLANTING PLAN

Since the previous committee meeting sites for the second phase of the planting plan have been selected, with the majority of these sites being granted permission. The bulk of the planting will be undertaken on the scheduled tree planting day (4th December). The Planning and Facilities Officer is currently applying to tree organisations for grants and has secured enough free whips to plant the allocated woodland sites.

To date, of the 81 sites identified for planting two have been fully completed and 19 partially completed. The majority of sites are highway verges, and the Planning and Facilities Officer has been submitting formal planting requests to Cheshire East Highways but unfortunately has had no success in securing permission.

The second wildflower meadow was sown in October in the field between St John's Wood and St Helena's Church.

3.0 COMMUNITY WILDFLOWER ALLOTMENT

Kevin Griffiths and Malcolm Thomas put forward an idea to grow wildflower plugs for planting across the Town. This has been supported by the Nature Action Plan WG. Mr Griffiths secured a half allotment plot at Warren Avenue and the allotment users have been very supportive of the concept and in setting up the initial stages of the plot. Kevin approached the council for assistance with the project and the funds for the purchase of a poly tunnel were made available. The poly tunnel provides an

environment to grow a variety of wildflower plugs. The project will serve the Nature Action Plan work, the council's wildflower meadows and other meadows in the town (e.g. the Crosstown Community Orchard).

Mr Griffiths is hoping to have the tunnel constructed over the next couple of months and is aiming to start production of wildflower plugs in the new year.

4.0 TOWN AMONGST TREES

The Town Amongst Trees project commenced in October 2019 to record the large mature tree population of the town, with a view to establishing a plan for succession planting, protecting trees and extending the cover.

Of the estimated 8,000 mature trees within the town boundary, 2,300 have now been surveyed and tagged in public spaces. Other areas surveyed include a part of St Johns Wood, College Wood, and the Heath. All data is mapped using QGIS, including the estimated total tree count of 35,000 provided by Bluesky's National Tree Map™ (NTM™)

Since beginning, Messrs Griffiths and Thomas have built a team of ten volunteer surveyors who have been out regularly on Wednesdays and Thursdays. They have provided the Planning and Facilities Officer with a spreadsheet of the survey results. The survey has identified trees which could potentially be preserved by a Tree Protection Order.

Additionally, Messrs Griffiths and Thomas have met with, and coached, volunteer teams in Macclesfield and Wilmslow who have been impressed with the aims and methodology.

5.0 THE BIG BULB PLANT

The "Knutsford Big Bulb Plant" was coordinated between 11th to 24th October with 24 planting events being held over the 14 days at green spaces across the whole town. All bulbs left over from the planting are being planted by the Town Ranger or Cemetery Groundskeeper.

6.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

None, information only report.

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	No change in policy appears to be forthcoming.
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	
6	Three	Launch of the tree mission	PFO	May-20	Outstanding	Tree Mission will be launched with the publicity from the previous planting and publicity surrounding a planting event in the autumn.
7	Three	Planning logs to be monitored and letters sent to applicants regarding replanting of trees	PFO/ASO	Ongoing	Complete	
8	Four	Tree tracker to be included on mission page	PFO	May-20	Complete	
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	
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	Complete	Knutsford Big Bulb Plant was implemented in October 2021.
15	Nine	Information to be published on council website promoting hedges and hedgehog holes	PFO	May-20	In Progress	This section of the website will be added with a number of updates.
16	Nine	Hedgehog highway campaign to encourage creation of hedgehog holes	PFO	Nov-21	In Progress	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	The submission of the outline planning application will assist in identifying a suitable route.
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
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