

REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

NATURE ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Report Reference EN-21-22
Meeting Date 7th February 2022
Agenda Item 6
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 Planning and Facilities Officer obtained free whips from The Woodland Trust, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, and The Conservation Volunteers and obtained a small grant for some feature trees from the Tree Council. The first couple of whip planting areas have been successfully planted, and with permission from Tatton Group to plant additional trees in Dogwood - around 1,500 trees have been planted so far. The feature trees for the second phase are being ordered imminently.

To date, of the 81 sites identified for planting 21 have been fully completed and 23 partially completed. Many of the remaining 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.

3.0 COMMUNITY WILDFLOWER ALLOTMENT

The committee previously approved supporting the creation of the community wildflower allotment at Warren Avenue by funding the provision of a polytunnel. The Town Council managed to secure a grant from Redrow to fund the polytunnel and initial materials, freeing up funds for further tree planting in the current financial year.

Mr Griffiths is taking delivery of the tunnel shortly and is hoping to have it constructed over the next couple of weeks with the aim of producing wildflower plugs for next 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™)

The team of ten volunteer surveyors are due to resume surveying in late spring. The collected results will be sent to the Planning and Facilities Officer once it has been formatted and analysed, and the volunteers are looking to improve the geolocation accuracy of the data collected in the upcoming season.

5.0 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 | The Tree Mission will be launched in Spring 2022. |
| 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. |

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| 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 in February 2022. |
| 16 | Nine | Hedgehog highway campaign to encourage creation of hedgehog holes | PFO | Nov-21 | In Progress | This will be launched in Autumn 2022. |
| 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. Subject to the decision this aim will be furthered in 2022. |
| 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. |

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| 29 | Fifteen | Project established to undertake tree mapping across Knutsford | WG/PFO | Aug-20 | Ongoing |
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