

Environmental Portfolio Report

July 2024

Newton St. Cyres Parish Council

Parish Grass Cutting

The new contractor has completed first cut of all areas indicated by the new mowing plan that was circulated in March this year. There was a considerable amount of grass mown, following No Mow May and the interruption of cuts in June due to establishing the new contract.

The grass that has been cut is lying on the areas as we have not asked for the quote to factor in grass collection. It has been interesting to observe the random wildflowers that have managed to grow within these areas during this time.

Wildflower/meadow areas on the green

Due to the unfortunate early mow of these areas earlier on in the year, there have not been as many flowers as the previous year. Various other species of grasses have grown which have provided a beneficial habitat for insects and birds.

Discussion with NEW regarding further planting of flowers are being progressed and will be addressed at their next meeting. They will undertake scything of these areas early September, with a mow in October.

Hedgerow planting

Permission has been granted from a local landowner to plant a hedgerow in November to attempt to regenerate an area of diminished hedge that was highlighted to the Parish Council in April's meeting. I have been successful in sourcing 30 saplings, thought to provide 8m of hedgerow from the Woodland Trust. NEW will very kindly plant this hedge November/December time.

Up to 420 trees can be sourced within each application cycle for community projects, providing criteria is met. The Woodland Trust have MOREhedges initiative in which local landowners are encouraged to access, with the Trust subsidising upto 75% of the cost.

Hedgerow sustainability with local landowners

This was discussed previously at a meeting, where I was happy to take this forward to have initial conversation regarding hedgerow management within the Parish. I

have not yet had details of any of the local landowners. Once I have this contact information I will make contact with them to discuss the MOREhedges initiative and identify any hedgerows which need some bolstering.

Pesticide use on grass verges approaching the Beer Engine

Disappointingly, pesticide has been sprayed on the corner of the verge opposite the Recreation Club. The rationale given for this spraying was that the corner when overgrown presents a hazard for road users due to reduced visibility. Factoring in this concern and to prevent further use of pesticide, I would like to propose that the Parish Council purchase a battery operated strimmer to trim down the grass during the growing season. Discussion with the Road Warden Group and with NEW is needed to see if they are happy to undertake this work on behalf of the Parish Council.

Allotments

I have undertaken an inspection of the allotments and the plots in use are being well maintained and are growing well. On discussion with one allotment holder, they are very happy with their allotment and the site in general. Water to the site would be a great asset, however they are rainwater harvesting as best they can.

The community allotment is producing well and being looked after by a group of 12 local parishioners. They have sourced local manure which is available to all the allotment holders and have been using Moonridge to source wood chippings. An informal working group happens once a month on a Sunday afternoon and the volunteers work at the allotment when their time allows. Produce is being harvested and is being shared with the local community via a box in the Parish Hall garden and in New Estate. The community allotment is limited by location and accessibility to be fully inclusive to those less mobile. I will be pursuing with the group if any grants are available to make the community allotment more accessible.