

Committee: Open Spaces

Date: 5 April 2022

Title: Open Spaces Team Report

Purpose of Report

To inform members of activities that have been undertaken by the Open Spaces team since the last report

Recommendation:

Members to note the Open Spaces Team Report.

Report:

1. The Recreation Ground

- 1.1 After a wave of vandalism including punching holes and graffiti to the roof of the toilet block, we decided to paint the external ceilings with Sandtex. This covered the graffiti and was thought that the stippled texture would put the vandals off from punching holes in it. Although its early days, so far it seems to be doing the trick and looks far more welcoming than when covered in graffiti and mould.
- 1.2 The fence line has been checked and several rotten posts and rails have been replaced. It is intended that with the help of our volunteers, we will ensure that the whole fence line is painted for protection and to standardize the colour scheme in time for the Platinum Jubilee events.
- 1.3 The hedge along Canal Way has had a final cut before the bird nesting season and the brambles and nettles, that we often receive complaints about, have been removed. Many members of the public expressed their thanks to us whilst we carried out the works. The recreation team will monitor this going forward to ensure that the weeds from below the hedge don't impede the footpath.
- 1.4 An Easter Egg hunt has been arranged for the week before Easter, the 11th through to 16th April, to bring people onto the recreation ground. An undisclosed number of wooden eggs have been hidden and the idea is for the public to find them, and email the correct number of eggs along with their name to be entered into a raffle to win a small prize of 1 of the 10 Easter eggs available and a special task is for the first person to find the golden egg and notify us of it's location. They will receive an Easter egg.
- 1.5 Works on the youth shelter have begun and will hopefully be complete very soon.

2. Herne Hill

- 2.1. We completed our hedge works at Herne Hill. We have managed to get the large section along the steep path layered where we could and removed the dead hedge. This allows much more light to come through to the ground layer, and this will help with the surface quality and increase the biodiversity of the ground layer.
- 2.2. We have a woodchipper this week which we will be using to tidy up the Herne Hill hedge. The chippings will be used on surfacing projects around the woods to improve access.
- 2.3. We have coppiced a section of wood along the lower path which has again really opened the area allowing far more light to reach the ground layer. We have put up some temporary interpretations to explain what we are doing and why. This has a QR code which links to the Herne Hill Management Plan. We plan to erect more of this type of panel to explain the works we are doing to users. We have some great feedback on this.

3. New Road cemetery

- 3.1. The last cut from the contractor took place last week which means that the countryside team will be taking responsibility for the grass cutting, and the team are really looking forward to getting going on it.
- 3.2. The tool boards around the cemetery had fallen into disrepair so they have now been replaced. The condition of the tools will be monitored and repaired when required.
- 3.3. In the next month or so we will look at the overall quality and condition and put a plan together for maintenance improvements of the cemetery.

4. Church

- 4.1. The initial cut of the Churchyard has been done. Although the grass was very long, we intend to bring this down slowly over the next few weeks to get it to a better height without shocking the grass or leaving excessive thatch.
- 4.2. The planter in the Minster churchyard will be in Royal colours for the Platinum Jubilee and we plan to plant them to create somewhat of a crown effect within the flowers.

5. West Crescent Meadow

- 5.1. The meadow at West Crescent is fast approaching its first cut which will take place in April, and this will be done using traditional methods with the help of volunteers.

5.2. We have also been successful in getting further seeds from a South Somerset District Council scheme. As part of this we will carrying out periodic surveying of the site to monitor progress. I look forward to updating you on our findings in the coming months.

6. Volunteers

6.1. We continue to hold monthly volunteer days which have proven super successful, and many have showed an interest to helping a little more often.

6.2. Our most recent task, our Kickstart apprentice guided the volunteers in a reptile survey up on the hill. Unfortunately, we didn't find any reptiles though lots of bird activity was spotted. In the afternoon, the volunteers helped us with the final touches on the Canal Way hedge by helping uncover the edge of the pavement.



6.3. A new volunteer from Somerset County Councils' Rights of Way team has come forward as Parish Paths Liaison Officer (PPLo) and will liaise with the Countryside Manager who will update the Open Spaces Committee on his activities.

7. New starters

7.1. We have two new members of staff. One from the Kickstart scheme who has joined us for 6 months and the second is a temporary member of staff who is with us until we recruit a permanent member of staff.

7.2. Both have settled well and have been trained on various tools and equipment and show a passion for the roles and are keen to learn as much as they can.

AGENDA ITEM 7

7.3. As part of the Kickstart scheme, the council receive funding towards some industry tickets training for the employee, which we will be identifying and arranging in the next few weeks, these are likely to include brush cutters and chainsaws.

8. Staff Training

8.1. Two members of the team have both passed the pesticides spraying course and will now put a plan together to get back on top of the areas which require attention over the coming months. We undertook an external 3 day course with an exam on completion.