

A GREEN PLAN

The proposal is that the PC should do its part to improve the natural environment where it can. Obviously as the PC does not own the land it cannot take any actions directly. Success then would be persuading others (landowners) to see the benefits of making small changes.

Most of the schemes suggested to date should have no real financial implications for the PC. Most of the effort is in communication. If costs are incurred, then funding will be sought to cover those costs.

Suggestions to Date:

1. Management of existing orchids on roadside verges (Shell garage and Sourton Lorry Park)
2. Management of roadside verges to maximize wildflowers (Highways)
3. Planting more trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy Scheme
4. Clear the vegetation around the old ruin near the Labyrinth and make the ruin a feature
5. Further enhance the opportunities in the closed churchyard by adding bird boxes and feeders
6. The creation of a Community Orchard
7. Planting more bulbs on the Green
8. Removing non-indigenous vegetation (laurel along the church yard boundary) and Rhododendron along the Granite Way

1. Management of existing orchids on roadside verges

This would be something that Highways/Shell garage/Highways England undertake but perhaps with some volunteer help (a parishioner had offered to bale the cut grass, but not sure if that offer still stands). Soonest that a change in management could happen is next year.

We have that time before next July to talk to the various organizations about their willingness to mow at the appropriate time. The first meeting with Highways is already scheduled for 17th August (this month).

Cost to PC

There should be no financial implications for the PC

Action

Clerk to chase up Highways England and Shell garage re response to our earlier letters sent to them on this subject.

SE/ML to meet Highways on site on 17th August.

2. Management of roadside verges for wildflowers

We need to find out from Highways what part PCs are expected to play and what Highways are willing to do. We are meeting Highways on 17th August so we can discuss this at the same time.

Earliest possible timings to make a start would be next year (2023)

Costs to PC

Unknown at present if there are any expectations from Highways that the PC would contribute financially in any way. Would not be feasible if Highways expect PC to undertake the work.

Action

SE/ML to discuss with Highways on 17th August 2022

3. Planting more trees as part of the Queen's Canopy Scheme

We were not able to plant all the trees that we had planned to do in Autumn 21?Spring 2022 because Highways and Highways England took so long to come back to confirm they were happy with our proposals. Confirmation from Highways has now come through. Highways England has specified that would prefer the trees to be Whitebeam, which was not an option from the Woodland Trust last year.

Cost to PC

There will be no costs to the PC for the trees, though mulch will need to be bought to protect the young saplings. Budget for mulch.

Action

Contact Woodland Trust to order more trees for this coming autumn and look into the possibility of acquiring some Whitebeam.

4. Clear the vegetation around the old ruin near the Labyrinth and make the fun a feature.

There have been complaints about the state of the area of grass between the churchyard and Granite Way since Tony Batten as stopped strimming the area.

Within the area is a ruined stone building, purported to be used to clean carriages (horse drawn variety). This ruin is fast disappearing under encroaching scrub.

DCC (Sustrans) have responsibility for cutting the areas within the Granite Way boundaries have been asked by the PC if they could cut this area of grassland now it is long cut by a volunteer.

In addition, the National Park Ranger has been approached about the possibility of getting some volunteers together to clear scrub from the ruin, as this is something probably that DCC would not be willing to do. The NPA could be asked if they would be willing to put up a small information board to explain about what the ruin is/was. Perhaps the NPA might even have small grants for such things.

Cost to PC

The project should have no costs to the PC.

Action

Clerk to chase up DCC about the cutting of the grass area (minus the Labyrinth area which the PCC do)

SE to approach NPA to see if they can provide some volunteers to clear the ruin and also to provide some on-site information.

5. Further enhance the opportunities in the closed churchyard by adding bird boxes and feeders.

The present grass cutting regime in the close churchyard has been responsible for the most fantastic display of wildflowers in the spring. The sight is something to behold. Future management of the area should ensure that the grass cutting regime continues to maintain and enhance the presence of the wildflowers.

One suggestion put forward is to enter the closed churchyard into the annual Best Churchyard for People and Wildlife competition run by the CPRE.

Further minor changes could further enhance the churchyard.

Any works done would need to be fully discussed with the PCC. One of their suggestions is to add bird boxes and feeders around the churchyard. This could be another project that the NPA might

be willing to help in find volunteers to make the boxes (local school children?) and find funding to pay for bird feeders and food.

Because arrangements with schools takes time and we have missed the deadline for the CPRE competition for this year, we would not be able to undertake this idea until 2023 at earliest.

Cost to the PC

There may be a cost to the PC in the provision of bird boxes, feeders and food. Funding would be sought to cover that cost.

6. The Creation of a Community Orchard

Conservation groups and the DCC are encouraging parish councils to plant as many trees as possible including community orchards. Sourton PC does not own any land so has nowhere to do this. It could though look to see if any local landowner might be willing to have a community orchard planted on their own land. It may sound unlikely, but Defra grants now encourage this sort of things it might be that a landowner could get grants through DEFRA's agricultural schemes to do just this.

There is a very small field isolated from others next to the Cycle Hire shop next to the A386, which doesn't appear to be used at present for grazing and doesn't appear to be part of a larger tenancy. This is owned by the Leawood Estate. Enquiries have already been made by the clerk as to whether Leawood estate would consider this option.

The idea would depend on either the existence of free trees from conservation groups or an alternative (which has been adopted in Bridestowe) is to ask people to dedicate a tree in memory of a loved one. This idea probably won't have legs if Leawood say no, unless another possible site is identified.

Action

Clerk to chase Leawood about whether they would consider the option.

Cost to PC

If Leawood claim the grant for the orchard through their own farm scheme, costs should be minimal. If there are costs, then grant from other sources would be sought.

7. Plant more bulbs on the Green

The Green already has daffodils planted in it, but the suggestion was to plant more. If more daffodils were to be planted, then any extra daffodils should be wild daffodils rather than an inappropriate garden variety.

Permission from the owners of the land would be sought and a grant obtained to pay for the bulbs. This could be done this autumn

Cost to PC

The cost of the bulbs would need to be covered by grant funding.

Action

Permission to plant obtained and grant aid sought, for planting this autumn.

8. Removal of non-indigenous species along the Granite Way and along the Churchyard boundary.

Ideally non-indigenous species, that have no conservation value should be removed where possible to make way for native species. There are Rhododendrons on the granite way and laurel in the churchyard boundary hedge. The Granite Way is the responsibility of DCC (Sustran). The PC can ask DCC if in the longer term it was possible to start a scheme to remove rhododendron where it is found along the Granite Way. The PC can in the longer term consider

the replanting of the section of hedge that is at present laurel. This would be quite a large undertaking and would only be possible if we could get a conservation group in to help. Saplings for a new hedge would need to be obtained through grant funding.

Perhaps the removal of the hedge, the clearing of the ruin and the building of the bird boxes could be a big enough project for a group such as Sticklepath Conservation Group to tackle and seek funding through as a single project. If this was the case the planning of the project and the application for funds could take time, but it could be something considered for the longer term.

Costs to PC

Removal of Rhododendrons - no cost.

Removal of laurel - grants would need to be obtained.

Action

Write to DCC re concern about invasive non-native species on Granite Way.

Laurel churchyard hedge - investigate if it is part of PC responsibility. If so in the longer-term talk to Devon Wildlife Trust about best way to fund its removal and planted up with more appropriate species. Talk to NPA about possible volunteer project.

Summary

Lots of communication required and minimal financial input.

Grants for bulb planting, and requests for more trees can be done this autumn. A small allocation of budget for mulching can be made as well. All the other options are unlikely to start until well into next year.

By asking permissions now we should be in a position to know what if anything we might be expected to contribute and can make those decisions before our next year's budget is finalized.

However, the expectation is that all the projects should be funded by grant aid, as the PC's own budget is very limited and with the cost-of-living sky rocketing, it would seem wrong to ask people to pay for these through their precept. On the contrary, the cost-of-living crises should encourage the PC to seek a lot more funding than we do at present to cover the cost of what we would like to do for our parishioners to make their parish a better place to live in.