

## **Parish Council environment review of the year – 18<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

### **Flood ditch in The Valley/Valley Road**

This year members of the PC explored ways to mitigate flood risk in The Valley area of the village, including meeting up with the excellent Walton & Wellesbourne Flood Action Group. After reviewing the environment and the available options we opted to concentrate on ensuring that the flood ditch in the area is at its most efficient in order to carry any excess rainwater away from the area as quickly as possible. We liaised with the farmer of Hill Farm, Sam Gibbs, and at the beginning of this year he hired a contractor to cut back the hedge that lies adjacent to the ditch to ensure that vegetation would no longer fall into it and cause congestion. The ditch is now clear of debris and Warwickshire County Council has scheduled a thorough clean of the ditch and culverts as soon as they have the resources. WCC has now accepted that the ditch is part of the highway and is therefore their responsibility to maintain.

### **Wildflower meadow on the playing field**

Disappointingly, the meadow hasn't produced many flowers during the past two seasons due to the strength of the grasses in the area; the only flowers to thrive are hardy wildflowers such as hawkbit, sorrel and daisies. However, the long grasses provide excellent habitat for invertebrates, so it was decided that the meadow will remain in place for now. Depending on cost, we may be able to plant plug plants on the meadow in the autumn, which will have a much stronger chance of surviving.

The 100 hedge saplings that were planted on the field three years ago are thriving.

### **Biodiversity in the village**

The PC is in the process of looking at opportunities to increase biodiversity in the village. We have identified three dead trees on the Spring Lane side of the playing field that were planted years ago but didn't grow. I have asked FoRGE to investigate appropriate replacements for these trees (the area is on a pathway, so the trees need to be small to medium when fully grown). There are also over 40 dead trees and an absent hedge on The Cricketers estate. The PC is liaising with WDC Cllr Becky Davidson to ascertain the maintenance contract situation of the estate so that we can replace the trees asap.

Cllr Davidson and FoRGE are assisting the PC with exploring the possibility of a community orchard.

### **Telephone Box renovation**

The PC began the process of renovating the village telephone box in November 2024. A dedicated team of volunteers met up once a week to carry out the work, and the box was completed in November 2025. Enormous thanks to Dave Steele and John Beard for all their hard work on this project.

We are currently trialling a system where groups in the village can curate the box for a month: the box has hosted a scarecrow to celebrate the scarecrow festival; a remembrance display during November; the Christmas story celebration during December; the Art Group exhibited during February; and the box was decorated for Easter during March/April.

### **Canal access ramp**

The canal access ramp project was finally completed in July and is now being used extensively by walkers and cyclists.

### **Bus service in the village**

The PC is liaising with Matt Western MP, WCC Cllr Ben Edwards and FoRGE to explore ways to improve the current bus service in the village. A meeting was arranged with the Stagecoach MD, but this was postponed. We are awaiting a new date.

### **The village pond**

The pond continues to provide essential flood defence measures and biodiversity enhancement to the village. Warwickshire Conservation Volunteers maintain the pond every August/September to ensure that the vegetation is kept in check.

### **Canalside Community Food: request for a footpath**

Canalside Community Food liaised with the PC to investigate the viability of providing a pathway from the village to the entrance to the farm. Cllr Edwards assisted by working with WCC to find an approximate cost for the project - estimated to be around £100,000. It was felt that this would require too much financial support from both the PC and Cllr Edwards' fund, so at this time the project isn't viable.

### **Village Newsletter**

During the past 18 months the village newsletter has developed into a single publication, distributed four times a year, featuring contributions from the PC, The Community Hall, the Sports & Social Club, the Football team, the churches, the WI, Canalside Community Food, Cllr Edwards, and Cllr Davidson. Feedback on the publication has been overwhelmingly positive. Enormous thanks to Dave Steele for his enthusiasm and hard work in editing and arranging the printing of this publication.

### **FoRGE activities**

The members of FoRGE have had a busy year; activities include: helping to bring the canal access ramp project to fruition; providing and planting two elm trees on the playing field to replace the trees removed due to Ash Dieback; assisting with the telephone box renovation; helping with the administration of the telephone box rota; volunteering for the monthly Footpath Group to maintain the footpaths and waymarkers in the village; exploring ways to improve biodiversity in the village; assessing the viability of reopening the village viaduct. They continue to run the popular annual plant sale on the green outside the Baptist Church.

Cllr Josie Sanderson